

Statement by Domingos A. Ferreira, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the São Tome and Principe to the United Nations (25 April 2006)

Mr. Chairperson,

I have the honour to address the Committee on Information at its 28th session on behalf of the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, comprised of Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your election, as well as the other Members of the Bureau, and to assure you of our Community's readiness to work constructively towards the strengthening of the United Nations capacity in the field of public information and communications.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the preparation of the reports that will serve as a basis for our work during the present session.

Mr. Chairperson,

Our Community acknowledges the importance of the efforts undertaken by the Department of Public Information in order to increase worldwide access to UN public information products and services, provide relevant and useful information, and promote an enhanced understanding of the work of the Organization. We appreciate, as well, the difficulty of "telling the UN story" in the context of limited resources.

Members of our Community also contribute directly to the dissemination of the UN work and values. For instance the public Portuguese television, through its international channels (RTP International and RTP Africa), has been broadcasting a series of programs on the UN activities worldwide, in the areas of peacekeeping, human rights, disarmament, development, HIV/AIDS, humanitarian aid, etc. These televised reports are fundamental for publicizing the UN work, from Timor-Leste to Africa, and particularly in Portuguese-speaking countries where a UN Portuguese voice is absent.

Our community recognizes the process of continued rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres to be an attempt to provide the best possible services and products in this context of financial constraints. We welcome the strategic approach the DPI has chosen, including the decision to invest more in information and communication technologies, the building of partnerships with Governments, civil society and the private sector, and the bolstering of its information presence in key locations, in order to enhance their regional coordination capacity.

At the same time, as pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General ([A/AC.198/2006/1](#)) on further rationalization, "the United Nations stories are global, but every global story has resonance in a local context". In this connection, the United Nations information centres are the instruments that give the UN voice "a local accent".

We, therefore, urge the Committee's attention to the offer made by the Government of Angola to host a UNIC in Luanda. The report on rationalization informs us that the DPI is currently not in a position to cover the costs for an additional office. Furthermore, it elaborates on the work performed by the Desk for Portugal in the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels with a view to disseminating information in Portuguese to the Portuguese-speaking African countries.

While the efforts of the Portugal desk in UNRIC are certainly commendable, we must, however, reiterate the fact that the Portuguese-speaking African community, spread out over five countries, remains beyond the coverage provided by DPI through its network of UNIC's in Africa. In addition, given the Angolan Government's offer to provide rent-free premises to the UNIC, the costs entailed by setting up and running the office would pale in comparison to the benefits to be obtained from it by the Portuguese-speaking African community, as well as the Department of Public Information and the Organization as a whole, in terms of reaching out to a wide audience that is eager for information on the United Nations provided with a "local accent". Lastly, the regional approach intended for the Luanda UNIC coincides squarely with the stated objective of the rationalization process currently embraced by the DPI of enhancing the regional coordination capacity of key locations.

We would like to take this opportunity, as well, to commend the work of the Rio de Janeiro UNIC, which continues to play an essential role in reaching a wide variety of constituencies in the country and extending essential communications support to the remainder of the UN Brazilian country teams.

Mr. Chairperson,

To conclude, our Community would like to acknowledge the significant work performed by the Portuguese Language Unit of UN Radio. The Unit currently has partnerships with over 20 networks, which distribute its programs to approximately 1000 radio stations, reaching an audience of over 36.2 million listeners. It has, in addition, recently established a partnership with the largest internet news provider in Latin America, which will enable it to further expand its outreach.

We welcome the efforts undertaken by the Unit to modernize its website and adopt a more client-oriented approach. The frequent interviews conducted by the Unit with representatives of Portuguese-speaking Governments and other organizations, as well as its coverage of issues of great interest to the Portuguese-speaking community, such as the role of MINUSTAH, the fight against hunger and poverty, as well as HIV/AIDS, and the implementation of the MDG's, have been invaluable for disseminating the UN story throughout the Portuguese-speaking Community, which brings together 250 million people in 8 countries and 4 continents, as well as many others working and living all over the world.

A final word should also be said about Timor-Leste. While its public information concerns are currently still met by the UN presence in that country, we should envisage as of now the provision of UN information services in Portuguese language once the current United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste completes its mandate.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.