

**Statement by Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for
Communications and Public Information (24 April 2006)**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address, for the fifth time, the annual session of the Committee on Information, as you begin your deliberations on "Questions relating to information". Last year I described this encounter as an "annual pleasure and a rare privilege," though, of course, it is much more than that. It is in fact an opportunity for me, as head of the Department of Public Information, to present a balance sheet of our performance: what has been achieved, what remains unattained and what course we plan to pursue in the immediate future.

Let me begin by acknowledging the important role the Committee on Information has played since its establishment in 1978, in helping to steer the work of the Department. The decision by the General Assembly to establish the Committee was driven by its desire to see close cooperation between DPI and Member States on informing the world's public about the "aims and achievements" of the United Nations. Over the past twenty-seven years, that cooperation has grown into a lively and productive partnership. This is not limited to two annual debates - first here in the Committee on Information, and later in the fall in the Fourth Committee - on questions relating to information. With the bureau of the Committee serving as a de facto standing body, the dialogue between DPI and the Committee continues throughout the year. This partnership has been a key factor in redefining DPI's role in a complex and evolving global media environment.

The interest shown by Member States in the work of DPI is also evident from the steady growth in the Committee's membership. With Dominican Republic and Thailand slated to become the newest members of this body, the Committee's membership will increase from 67 in 1978 to 110 in 2006. On behalf of the staff of my Department, I should like to thank the Committee for this quantifiable testimony to Member States' growing interest in our work. If the warm and kind words addressed to DPI, in general, and to me, in particular, by the Chairman, Ambassador Motoc are any indication, I am convinced that public information will remain an activity of considerable appeal to the membership of our Organization.

Mr. Chairman,

DPI's task, simply put, is to tell the UN story. Since the UN's story is also the story of our world and of the time in which we live, these stories are always changing, sometimes alternating between hope and despair. From the inspiring achievement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the triumphant dismantling of colonialism, from the successes of peacekeeping to the widespread if uneven growth in human prosperity, we have seen in the last sixty years a collective march toward the goals of peace, justice and development enshrined in the United Nations Charter. The same six decades have, however, been blighted by the savagery of war, the soul-destroying persistence of poverty, and the rampant spread of

disease. If the UN has won credit for preventing the Cold War from turning "hot" and placing issues such as sustainable development and the empowerment of women at the top of the global agenda, we have also heard statements dismissing the Organization as "irrelevant" to the challenges of today, and others demanding that it reform or perish. Yet, at no point in time has the United Nations ceased its efforts to inspire the vast majority of people in the world to hope and to dream for a better future. Just seven months ago, at the 2005 World Summit, more than 150 heads of state and government - the largest gathering of world leaders in human history - renewed their pledge to uphold the ideals of the United Nations and reaffirmed the vital importance of an effective multilateral system. And yet Member States are engaged currently in a contentious and sometimes divisive debate about the nature, extent and tenor of the reforms needed to renew the Organization.

This apparent contradiction is also reflected in some opinion polls. As Warren Buffett once admonished, an opinion poll is no substitute for thought, but we in the Department of Public Information fully recognize the value of polls, especially as tools to evaluate the nature of the challenge we face in our communications efforts. According to these opinion polls, support for the United Nations is down in some countries, but in others they show the Organization is on the rebound. For example, according to the most recent Gallup poll, the United States public gave the Organization its second lowest ratings in the 53-year history of these surveys. However, another poll, conducted by Zogby International, found that more than two-thirds of Americans believe the UN is central to solving world conflicts - a ten percent increase over the number who expressed that belief in 2005. Furthermore, some eighty percent of those Americans polled by Zogby view the decisions of our Member States as the key element in the Organization's capacity to accomplish its work. The picture is equally mixed when it comes to other regions of the world. In another poll conducted by PIPA/Gallup, a majority of respondents in eight African countries surveyed said they believe the UN should have the right to intervene to stop human rights abuses such as genocide, and that the UN is the entity Africans most trust to intervene in situations like Darfur.

No matter how contradictory we may find these numbers, the underlying message is unmistakably clear. People's faith in the "idea" of the UN as a universal Organization leading a global collective effort for the common good is still firm. However, faith in the UN as a "reality" has weakened. With horror unfolding daily, and the world unable to stop it, Darfur is a good example of this gap between intent and reality. People are questioning not the ideals behind the UN nor its legitimacy as a universal body, but its ability and commitment to deliver on the promises made by our Member States.

One of our key challenges, therefore, is to close this gap and once again make the UN not only a symbol of our collective hope, but also a powerful instrument for translating that hope into everyday reality. With comprehensive reform efforts now under way, such a possibility is within our reach.

Indeed, signs of renewal are everywhere. We find them not only in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit, but also in the flurry of activities that has followed the Summit. With the creation of the Human Rights Council, the UN's human rights machinery has been

revitalized. A Peacebuilding Commission and a Democracy Fund have given the Organization new resources for implementing integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery. A comprehensive review of UN mandates is on the anvil, creating a unique opportunity to strengthen and adapt our Organization to new priorities. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has also proposed measures for a fundamental overhaul of the rules, systems and culture of the UN Secretariat. Through targeted investments, the realignment of staff skills, and streamlined budget and finance processes, the UN's management practices he proposes will be modernized, creating a more transparent, more nimble and more accountable Secretariat. We know this issue is before the Fifth Committee today. DPI is pleased to be an integral part of this change - a change that it is our job to project.

Mr. Chairman,

As members of this Committee are well aware, steps to reorient DPI, both in terms of what it does and how it does it, began three years ago, with our 2002 reform proposals. Working in partnership with this Committee, the Department undertook a comprehensive review of its work. Three concrete measures followed:

First, DPI redefined its mission statement, committing itself to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact. The statement recognizes that the Department's work is not an end in itself and that the information which the Department must communicate is generated by the substantive work of the Organization and its component parts.

Second, it put in place a new operating model, which recognizes that content generation emanates from the other departments and offices of the Secretariat and organizations of the United Nations system, while content coordination and refinement, as well as content presentation and distribution, are the responsibility of this Department, working in close cooperation with the media, Member States and civil society partners.

Third, it established a new organizational structure, based on the revised operating model, which now includes a Strategic Communications Division, a News and Media Division and an Outreach Division. The Information Centres Service, the Internet Service and the Dag Hammarskjöld Library were, respectively, merged into each of these Divisions, while ancillary functions like the Cartographic Unit, which moved to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, were dispensed with altogether. The result was a reformed and more coherent departmental structure.

In reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department, submitted at each successive session of the Committee since 2002, we have chronicled in great detail each of the steps taken, measures implemented and results achieved. The five reports of the Secretary-General now under your consideration, are the latest in this series. You will notice that, for the first time, there is no report that specifically addresses the question of reorientation, simply because we have now implemented those aspects of the reform proposals that are within the authority of the Secretary-General and are based on existing

General Assembly resolutions and guidance provided by this Committee. Nonetheless, we remain conscious, even if we think we are reoriented, that reform is an ongoing process, not a one-time event, and that change is the only constant in our work. There is no room for complacency at DPI.

Mr. Chairman,

Reform, by its very definition, is change aimed at improving the way in which things are done. And improvement implies becoming more strategic, more efficient and more accountable. Clearly, what really counts is not what measures we take in the name of change, but what results we achieve through change.

In the case of DPI, what are the results of the changes that we have introduced?

Let me give you a brief outline of the answer to this question. There will, of course, be an opportunity to review it in greater detail at the interactive dialogue scheduled for this afternoon, which will take place in this room from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. I would encourage you, especially those attending the Committee's work for the first time, to join me and my colleagues in that dialogue.

The changes DPI introduced and implemented in the last three years had three clear strategic objectives:

1. to achieve greater effectiveness through the targeted delivery of public information;
2. to make enhanced use of the new information and communications technologies; and
3. to build an expanded grass-roots support base through partnerships with civil society.

A strategic approach, in its essence, requires setting priorities in a manner that enables an organization to do not only what is most pressing, but also what is most achievable and where it can have the greatest impact. Under DPI's new strategic approach, that goal is achieved through closer consultations with DPI clients, greater system-wide coordination and the systematic evaluation of our activities - all of which are proud "firsts" for the Organization.

In order to target our focus where it can have the greatest impact, Secretariat departments and UN family organizations are identified as "clients" and DPI as the "service provider." Some 50 departments and UN offices, and another 26 field missions, are now included in the client consultation process. As substantive offices supporting the implementation of UN priorities, these client offices are responsible for generating the content, that is, the raw material, the setting of priorities and the key messages. Our task, as information specialists, is to take that content, repackage it for various target audiences and promote it globally. This is done through a variety of means: using traditional means such as print and audio-visual media, and increasingly the newer information and communications technologies. Three

distinct sets of collaborators support DPI's Headquarters staff in their efforts to gain maximum media exposure: United Nations information centres, services and UN Offices now located in 63 countries, the UN family of organizations, who are now integrated into the United Nations Communications Group, and a global network of over 1,500 civil society organizations, serving as re-disseminators and multipliers.

This integrated approach has proved to be practical and effective, both in terms of developing sound communications strategies and implementing such strategies through interdepartmental and system-wide coordination.

First, constant consultation and feedback through the client planning process has enabled DPI to tailor its products and services more closely to the needs of the Organization. For example, the desire of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, one of DPI's major clients, to bring the story of peacekeeping into the living rooms of audiences across the world, led to a special emphasis on "getting the story out" through the visual media. Following a public information training workshop for peacekeeping missions organized by DPI last year, UNTV and the peacekeeping missions have aligned their electronic communications so that video footage from peacekeeping missions is transformed into feature stories at Headquarters and disseminated to broadcasters world-wide by DPI's UNIFEED, which now distributes at least two feature stories on peacekeeping every week.

Second, the prioritization and coordination demanded by the client planning process has resulted in a more strategic approach to communications, helping client Departments develop broader communications goals, plan for the longer term and move beyond their previous event-driven priorities.

Third and perhaps most important, it has improved understanding across the Organization of the importance of putting communications at the heart of our substantive work. Most client departments, starting with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, now recognize public information as an integral part of their work and therefore make every effort to involve information specialists from the very outset of a new project. A "culture of communications" has truly been established in the Secretariat.

Mr. Chairman,

One of the biggest UN stories in the past six months or so has been the 2005 World Summit. We are pleased that we were able to carry out a highly successful campaign for the Summit, as reported by the Secretary-General in A.AC.198/2006/5. One way to measure the success of this campaign was through media analysis. Did the world's media pay attention to the messages we conveyed? Did our efforts make any difference? In order to answer these questions, we invited a group of independent and external media analysts to review the quantitative and qualitative value of our promotional work. They concluded that the proactive efforts of the UN communications team during the World Summit produced a discernible overall impact in the global media. Poring over hundreds of media reports, collected from all parts of the world, they found that the efforts of the United Nations spokespersons had directly led to the Organization being depicted in a more positive light.

The Summit itself is behind us. The Department is now focused on keeping the world informed about the exciting changes taking place as a result of the Summit, including the negotiations among Member States on several contentious issues, while rendering the complexities of institutional change comprehensible. Beginning with the Secretary-General's op-ed article, "Glass at least half full," and through press interviews and background briefings, the Department has reached out to the world's media, bringing out the drama of decision-making at the United Nations, sometimes live through our upgraded webcasting channels. The Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly themselves played a key part in this effort, the success of which is best illustrated by the worldwide media coverage of the new Human Rights Council. Following the initial ill-informed criticism of the President's plan for a new Human Rights Council, DPI elaborated an intensive three-week campaign to educate and better inform key journalists and editorial boards. It was a collaborative effort from the start. DPI was able to bring together staff in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Office of the President of the General Assembly, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN information centres, and enlist the co-operation of several non-governmental partners, including the United Nations Foundation and major human rights organizations. The General Assembly President and the Secretary-General briefed media on the record, with many additional background briefings provided by senior staff and specialists. An op-ed written by the Secretary-General explaining why the new Council deserved international support, for example, was published in a major newspaper in the US and, with the help of UNICs, translated and reproduced in some 40 newspapers in 31 countries. The United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels alone was able to place the article in 10 major West European newspapers. The tide slowly turned and the media began recognizing the value of the new human rights body. A number of publications revised their assessments and took far more positive positions, recognizing the improvements made through complex negotiations. While some opposition remained unreconciled, the communicators played a vital role in mitigating some negative perceptions of this key reform. The episode became a prime example of the use of accurate public information to achieve an enhanced understanding of the work of the Organization.

Mr. Chairman,

In informing the world about the work of the UN and mobilizing global public opinion in support of a revitalized world body, DPI relies increasingly on its network of UN information centres. A good communications strategy by itself is of limited value unless it reaches the audience it is meant for. Aware of this challenge, we took measures to further strengthen UNICs and fully integrate them within the overall communications strategy of the Department. Through the realignment of resources, the upgrading of the use of information and communications technologies, building partnerships at local and regional levels and regular interaction with Headquarters, we are equipping UNICs for success. A detailed report on the progress made by UNICs is given in the Secretary-General's report, Continued rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A.AC.198/2006/1). I would like to draw your attention to some of the highlights.

Bolstered by the more prominent role assigned to them, UNICs have emerged as crucial players in promoting UN priority issues at the national level as evident in relation to the 2005 World Summit and its Outcome Document. The centres translated and placed the Secretary-General's op-ed article on the Summit in 55 major newspapers in 44 countries. By designing communications strategies aimed at specific local audiences and translating major documents and press material in local languages and posting them on their own websites, UNICs helped DPI connect with a wide range of readers who do not use the Organization's official languages. At present, 49 United Nations information centres and services maintain websites in 5 official and 28 non-official languages. The Regional UN Information Centre in Brussels alone maintains a website in 13 languages, connecting all of Western Europe.

How our communications strategies are being better tailored to the needs of regional and local audiences can be seen in the Rwanda outreach and educational programme that DPI was asked to undertake by the General Assembly. Key information centres are collaborating with DPI's Africa Section on the development and implementation of the global programme. UNICs arranged special commemorations on the occasion of this year's anniversary of the Rwanda genocide, including a video screening in Bujumbura, a panel discussion in Dar es Salaam, a school event in Moscow and an outreach event with Rwandan refugees in Yaounde.

With the introduction of a new operating model for the UN Communications Group at the country level, UNICs have been given a leadership role in coordinating communications activities at the national level. There is also a growing cohesion taking place throughout the UNIC network itself, which has been encouraged by the regional and global strategic communications workshops recently organized by DPI and the use of improved internal communications tools.

A key focus of the rationalization of UNICs has been to strengthen the centres in major media hubs and to give them a greater coordinating role at the regional level. We are already seeing the difference. Of the posts redeployed as a result of the regionalization of the Western European UNICs, two D-1 posts have now been filled in the information centres in Cairo and Mexico City; and the third one designated for Pretoria is expected to be filled soon. The Cairo Director has been in place for 4 months and is already providing public information support and guidance to the other information centres in the Middle East. The other two centres will follow this lead. Being based in the same time zone and working from a country with many similar attributes as those in the rest of the region, these senior Directors are in a position to anticipate needs, provide immediate guidance and generate synergies among the information centres in their region.

Within the network of UNICs, a special role is played by the United Nations Regional Information Centre - UNRIC - in Brussels, not only because it covers 21 countries and operates in 13 languages, but also because of the higher visibility it has ensured for the United Nations in a politically crucial region. Within a very short period of time, UNRIC has emerged as a major media centre. A summary of its activities is included in the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A.AC.198/2006/1. The report reflects the initial

evaluation of UNRIC's operation prepared with the help of a communications expert. I am pleased to be able to provide additional information concerning UNRIC's work under its new management, since the drafting of this report.

The thrust of the concept to establish a regional hub for Western Europe was to rationalize and streamline information activities and to create a critical mass to perform those activities more efficiently, while at the same time allowing for synergies in the hub and ensuring better coordination. The creation of this new structure was possible largely due to the advanced technological base available in Western Europe, the geographical contiguity of the countries involved and the ease of travel within and between the countries. To serve this geographically and linguistically diverse group, the Centre's staff are divided into nine geographical desks that cover 21 countries. The Centre is also divided into nine thematic desks that correspond to UN thematic priorities. The desk officers in charge of these issues seek interlocutors in the EU institutions and within the NGO community.

The Centre serves as an important liaison between the United Nations and the European institutions on a broad range of activities. Recently, with the decision on the Human Rights Council occupying much of the media's attention, the Centre helped establish a group called "Friends of Human Rights in Europe," which included representatives from the European Commission and the European Parliament, as well as major NGOs. The Centre already holds joint press briefings with EU officials and its staff meet on a regular basis with EU communications officials. A plan for weekly joint press briefings about UN-EU relations is being developed now. The response from the media has been very positive, as was evident from the extensive coverage of UN reform and related issues, both in print and audio-visual media.

UNRIC has also been assigned a coordinating role among the 18 UN agencies in Brussels. Replicating the model of the UN Communications Group at UN Headquarters, it has established a communications group for the Brussels-based UN family organizations. With UNRIC in the lead, the group meets once a month to plan, coordinate and carry out communications work. Steps have also been taken to establish a UN system website.

The Centre is still faced with a few teething problems, including overcoming physical distance from its target audiences within the constraints of its limited travel budget. A regional communications strategy outlining the longer-term communications objectives in the region, now being developed, will take into consideration the existing capacities, opportunities and limitations of the centre. The strategy will identify key communications priorities and will develop common messages to be disseminated by the Centre to its target audiences in the countries it serves. These efforts are being further strengthened by fostering closer coordination between the Centre and DPI at Headquarters, and between UNRIC and the two UN information services in Europe, located in Geneva and Vienna.

Mr. Chairman,

As I have already indicated, a central element in our approach to communications has been greater coordination within the UN system, at the centre of which lies the UN Communications

Group, first established as a weekly meeting at Headquarters under my chairmanship, which continues, and then extended into an annual gathering of heads of public information of UN organizations. The Communications Group brings the wide body of knowledge, expertise and interests of the UN system under one umbrella.

It has already proved its utility on a number of issues, ranging from common media accreditation policies to co-ordinating campaigns on the MDGs. With the avian influenza and possible human pandemic posing a grave potential threat, for example, the Communications Group is helping the United Nations system to face the immense task of keeping the world informed and prepared. To have any impact, UN communicators must speak with one voice, keep each other informed and avoid discordance in our messaging. Based on each agency's core competencies, it has established a clear division of labour among UN entities for coordinated information channels and messages. Should the worst fears come to pass, I am pleased to be able to assure that the world will be informed of the measures we all need to take to protect ourselves and our families.

Mr. Chairman,

Our innovative use of new information and communications technologies has had a striking impact. Now television and radio reports, as well as photographs, are increasingly transmitted from the field to Headquarters via the Internet. This seemingly mundane development is in fact very exciting, because we can be more responsive to breaking news than ever before, disseminate to ever larger audiences and do so with minimal transmission costs. Not so long ago, the only way we could distribute photos and video was to mail them; radio programmes were going out by phone or by audio cassette. Today, radio stations can easily download our programmes from the web - with a higher audio quality than the telephone - and we can offer more services. For instance, the Arabic radio unit posts its daily and weekly programmes, but now also offers broadcasters longer interviews with UN officials as well. These new services have helped UN radio double its audience in the past two years, as more and more stations - including in the developing world - have acquired Internet capability.

A real revolution in Internet delivery is coming in video, and DPI intends to be on the cutting edge of that revolution. We are now able to receive video from several UN agencies and peacekeeping operations. This has already made us more nimble, able to respond to news events more quickly and to supply the news material that broadcasters crave. The heart of this service is UNIFEED, a daily news feed launched last year in partnership with UNICEF and APTN. For the first time in UN history, we are distributing video news material by **satellite** to some 600 broadcasters worldwide, including major international networks like CCTV, Sky News, RTVE and the BBC World Service, as well as to a number of broadcasters across the developing world. In the past year, we have distributed almost 1,000 UN stories covering humanitarian emergencies, UN field programmes, peacekeeping operations, events at Headquarters and much, much more. The first pictures showing the famine in Niger were disseminated on UNIFEED and the team had its first global scoop last month with exclusive pictures of the arrest of Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia. What you saw was UN footage.

We are also investing in our capacity to receive and send video on the web and we will soon start using the web to disseminate news video. In the meantime, we continue to serve broadcasters that do not have the technical means to receive satellite material. We are still mailing out audio and video tapes - some 4,000 video tapes in the last six months of 2005 alone - mainly of course to developing countries.

More and more areas of the website are also benefiting from the conversion to a database platform. A new web-based Media Alert, a new web page for United Nations press releases and meetings coverage summaries, and the development of a web-based media accreditation procedure are all examples of the innovative ways the Department is using the web to better serve its clients. The new press release web page, in English and French, was launched on 6 April. It provides quick, global access to DPI's coverage of intergovernmental deliberations - some while still in progress - as well as to numerous other meetings and statements by senior officials, with an advanced search function providing access to press releases and other information resources dating back to October 1995.

Mr. Chairman,

That brings me to our last - but not least - element in our reform framework: public outreach. There is now widespread recognition that governments, civil society and the private sector depend on one another and need to work together. The United Nations was created in the name of "We the Peoples". It owes its existence to the peoples of the world, who continue to view this Organization as the source of their hope for a better tomorrow.

The large pool of NGOs affiliated with DPI provides a crucial link with ordinary citizens at the grassroots level. Reflecting the growing importance of these groups in global affairs, DPI has sought their increased involvement with, and contribution to, policy development and debate at the United Nations. The turnaround we witnessed with the Human Rights Council - from strong reservation to near universal approval - was made possible in part by the proactive outreach conducted by civil society groups.

One target audience that we have very consciously tried to reach are students and teachers. By using a variety of tools, including electronic communications via the Internet, meeting with remote partners through live video conferences via webcasts, DPI has slowly moved inside the classroom. We are not competing with the teachers, but we have become a good teacher's aide. Last year in November, I attended the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis. With the help of DPI's Cyberschoolbus and the UN information centres, we held two interactive video chats, connecting with students from both sides of the digital divide. Children as young as 15 and 18, together with their teachers, animatedly discussed the benefits of using ICT to narrow the digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world. And they were sitting in four different African countries, while I was sitting in Tunis. A young girl from Nairobi later wrote to us, "Now this is something I would like to continue doing."

To introduce the UN to young people, DPI has also teamed up with MTV. Early this year, DPI's UN Works Programme took MTV to Pakistan for a special TV programming and website

coverage of the earthquake there. The goal was to alert young audiences to the devastation and to relief efforts. And it worked. MTV got a very positive response from viewers, some of whom said the report from the South Asia earthquake aftermath was completely eye opening for them. A 14 year-old boy from San Jose, California wrote that it was the first programme he had ever seen on the earthquake. "Thank you for showing America's youth what is going on and how we can help," he wrote.

DPI's outreach to the faith-based community is also a new activity. As part of our continuing efforts to promote dialogue among civilizations, we launched the "Unlearning Intolerance" series two years ago. Our objective was to provide a platform for people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds to examine various manifestations of intolerance and to explore ways to promote respect and understanding amongst peoples and ways in which education can help overcome intolerance. We also wanted to help them find out how our common humanity binds us - not divides - us. Four seminars have been held so far, focussing on anti-semitism, Islamophobia, the role of "hate media" and combating genocide. After the first "intolerance seminar," a well-known Jewish intellectual told us that these seminars reflect the universal hope that, despite inbred misconceptions and fears, human goals and humanitarian goals are attainable. Echoing him, an Islamic scholar wrote to us, in the current state of affairs, there are few things that are as important and relevant as the "Unlearning Intolerance" initiative.

We have also further strengthened our relationship with the academic community. The institution of a new section consolidating the essential reference base for UN activities, the Yearbook of the United Nations, opens up greater opportunity for scholars to contribute to the evolution of UN thinking and policy through the medium of seminars, university programmes, including video-conferencing, as well as the print and electronic editions of the UN Chronicle. Such "inreach" is also reflected in the "Holocaust and the United Nations" programme authorized by the General Assembly, where scholars will be invited to draft discussion papers on the Holocaust and related topics such as hatred, bigotry, racism and prejudice to promote awareness and foster debate.

Mr. Chairman,

Knowledge, according to an old African proverb, is like a garden. If it is not cultivated, it cannot be harvested. Of course, one of the places where knowledge is best harvested is the library. In recent years, the role of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library has expanded so dramatically that we had to propose changing its very name. With knowledge sharing and content management emerging as the two overarching focuses of DHL, we have proposed to you that the official name of the library be expanded to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and Knowledge Sharing Centre. "DHLKSC" may be a mouthful of an acronym, but at least it will no longer be confused with a courier service.

This change is not merely symbolic. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library - through the Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries - is leading a concerted effort to help UN libraries build upon their original role as independent repositories to develop networks of knowledge sharing communities. Moving from building and maintaining book and periodical collections, (you may remember me saying last time that

they are moving from 'collections to connections'), it is facilitating a knowledge-enabled environment and the exchange of information among stakeholders. As explained in the report of the Secretary-General on the modernization and integrated management of UN libraries (A.AC.198/2006/2), United Nations libraries are reorienting their products and services, their physical spaces, their staff skills and their working relationships with their colleagues within the Organization in order to offer timely and relevant support to their growing and changing constituencies.

In fact, the entire focus of library work at the United Nations has now shifted to a model of service that is oriented towards making connections for its users, between documents and functions, between people and documents and between people and people with a broader world-wide reach. UN libraries are now providing increasingly personalized service and direct support to constituents, resulting in the more effective dissemination of information. Library staff are also learning to adapt to the new work environment created by the technology and resources available on the Internet in order to provide access to a range of electronic collections, regardless of their locations.

As members of delegations to the United Nations, you are among those to benefit most from these changes. Those of you who prefer the old style library, where the smell of a printed page could energize a creative mind, please be assured that print collections will continue to be maintained, and recurrent DPI publications will continue to be published in hard copy.

The Dag Hammarskjöld Library is also at the centre of a new system-wide focus on improving internal communications. It has been given the responsibility of managing the Organization's Intranet, iSeek, in an effort to enhance and improve internal communications. This has resulted in a more prominent, pragmatic role in management reform, helping to strengthen the United Nations through better information and knowledge sharing. While all duty stations, as well as the network of United Nations Information Centres, have access to iSeek, the reach of the intranet is gradually being extended to other duty stations to migrate to the common iSeek platform to ensure that all Secretariat staff, regardless of their duty station, have access to the same level of information and a user-friendly interface to enterprise-wide tools.

Mr. Chairman,

I have given you, Mr. Chairman, an excessively full report. Much of what I have described above is a picture, created in very broad strokes, of a Department that took upon itself a challenge to retool itself with the sole purpose of becoming a more effective public voice of the world body in the first decade of the twenty-first century. These changes are real, but how do we know that they are also having an impact? In India we say, *Pratyakshya ko praman ki aavashyakta nahin*. That is, facts do not require proof to stand correct. I will give you the "facts," but first let me tell you how we arrived at identifying those facts.

Three years ago, in cooperation with the Office of the Internal Oversight Services, we launched an "annual programme impact review," or — given our congenital taste for acronyms — the APIR. It was designed as an internal managerial tool that would systematically evaluate our products and activities, employing a results-based framework

similar to that of the programme budget. At the core of this approach was to get each manager to build evaluation into his or her regular work programme. We asked our managers to establish baseline data and use them to track future performance. Clearly-measurable performance indicators, such as opinion polls, users' surveys, media reviews, etc., were formulated, linking the Department's products and activities more precisely to the needs of target audiences. Practically all DPI programme managers have been trained in self-evaluation, a pioneering development for the Secretariat. The results of our three-year project are presented in great detail in the Secretary-General's report, *Assessing the effectiveness of United Nations public information products and activities* (A.AC.198/2006/4). Here are a few "facts" drawn from this report - and from the ongoing self-evaluation - that show, in quantifiable terms, that an ever-increasing number of people are reading our material, visiting our websites and listening to our programmes:

- Over the past two years, the estimated reach of UN radio programmes has more than doubled to some 300 million a week, with particularly strong growth in Arabic, Chinese, French and Spanish language listenership;
- The UN's multilingual websites receive one million visitors every day, generating over 2.6 billion hits annually. On average, website usage - both for the main UN website and for local language sites in the field - has increased by 50 percent since 2003;
- Each copy of *Africa Renewal* and *Afrique Renouveau*, the centrepiece of the Organization's Africa information programme, is read by an average of eight to nine people;
- Cyberschoolbus, DPI's website for children, has shown an even higher growth rate — 138 per cent over the past two years;
- The size of the student audience of the *UN Chronicle* has increased by 86% since our reforms in 2003; and
- Visitors who take our guided tours have indicated that, in 9 of 10 cases, they leave the tour with a better understanding of the work of the Organization and more support for it.

While these numbers speak for themselves, the intangibles can hardly be quantified. With the help of the APIR, we now know what works and what does not, and can take appropriate corrective measures where necessary. For example, based on feedback from users, the Department's press release website has been redesigned to better serve the public's information needs. Following a users' survey on its e-mail service, the UN News Centre is working on technical solutions that respond to the subscribers' suggestions. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library website has also been re-designed based on feedback from its users, including you, the delegations of Member States.

Clearly, for DPI, assessing the effectiveness of its work is not an option. It is the foundation for ensuring that our programmes are better matched with the needs of our audiences. Incidentally, DPI was the first Department in the Secretariat to institute self-evaluation as an integral part of its work programme. Its pioneering work is now regarded as a model and we hope it will be replicated throughout the Secretariat. Indeed, we have been told it will be. For DPI, "the culture of evaluation" is not a slogan, but a reality.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I have already spoken much longer than I had intended to. I know of a certain very prominent American politician, who after a long statement, drew the warmest applause when he said, "in conclusion." In my case, before I say, "in conclusion," there is one last thing I would like to mention.

The Committee on Information and DPI are linked by a common purpose. Both are committed to making the world better aware of the role of the United Nations. At the moment, we are in the midst of a remarkable exercise in renewal led by Member States at the initiative of the Secretary General. The ongoing mandate review is a vital part of this reform process. One area of particular interest for us is the role of the Committee on Information and its validation of the activities of DPI. Over the years, the resolution that gives DPI its mandates has incrementally grown, with Member States giving guidance on policy as well as operational matters. As you will soon begin negotiations on a new draft resolution, I would urge you to closely re-examine the text and find ways to streamline the resolution. In keeping with the reform spirit, by making it shorter, eliminating texts that have not changed in a decade, focusing only on what matters most, you can give DPI solid practical direction as well as greater flexibility to organize its work to respond to your needs, the needs of Member States. Whichever way you go, let me assure you that DPI will, as always, respect your guidance.

Mr. Chairman,

The French philosopher Henri Bergson once said, "To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly." This in a way is also the story of the United Nations. Now in its sixty-first year, the UN has constantly reinvented itself, responding to the demands of the times and reflecting, as well as shaping, the world's changing priorities. Through reinvention and revitalization, DPI, as the public voice of the Organization, has done the same. Sometimes staying ahead of the curve, it has provided the Organization with a model for change. The United Nations now stands on the cusp of a new era. We look forward to the vital role which our Organization will play in the future with your support. We know tomorrow belongs to us, but we will earn it by our performance today.

Thank you.