

Statement by Mr. Mahmoud Aboud, Chargé d'affaires, a.i., Permanent Mission of the Union of the Comoros to the United Nations (2 May 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

First I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Committee on Information and would like to extend the full support of my Delegation. I also wish you and other members of the Bureau success in your endeavour to lead the Committee toward a successful conclusion.

On behalf of my delegation, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Kiyoo Akasaka on his appointment as the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and would also like to assure him of the full support of my delegation.

I am pleased to take this occasion to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, for an excellent performance as the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

The Comoros aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Yet, speaking for the first time at this Committee, my delegation would like to highlight some topics, which are of particular importance to my country.

Mr Chairman,

One of the main objectives of the Department of Public Information is to circulate the messages of our universal Organization around the world; consequently the DPI becomes the voice of our Organization. It has a unique and crucial responsibility in promoting and informing the people around the world in a comprehensible and efficient way the message and activities of the United Nations.

We also believe that the DPI should emphasize its strategy on activities and issues in areas of special awareness for developing countries such as human rights, HIV/AIDS, decolonisation, peace and reconciliation and climate change.

We believe that the primary task of the DPI is to provide accurate and timely information to the public in each corner of the planet, from New York to New Caledonia to the people living in the Peshawar Mountains or the Amazon Indian living in the middle of the Amazonian forest.

My delegation welcomes the DPI efforts and activities in promoting and contributing ways to bridge the existing gap between the developing and developed countries and the various initiatives taken to ameliorate disparities.

My delegation considers that the DPI should accentuate its approach on disseminating the message and activities of the UN through new technologies, yet it should also continue to inform the public through the traditional media, especially to populations in remote areas and particularly in small islands states where new technology is not available to all citizens. In

those places, a big huge number of the population live in extreme poverty, and their daily lives are occupied with how to obtain a daily meal and portable water, rather than how to pay more than a dollar per hour to connect the internet.

That is why, in its outreach activities, my delegation highly recommends the UN Radio service to increase its programs in other widely spoken languages. Another major way of reaching those who cannot afford today's medium of communication is to encourage the DPI to make more audiovisual documentaries especially video on the works and activities of the United Nations and distribute to those people in the remote areas of the globe.

On multilingualism, taking into consideration resolution 33/115C of 18 December 1978 of the General Assembly on the UN DPI policies and activities, I quote: Requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to enable the Department of Public Information to maintain an adequate balance in the use of the official languages of the United Nations with, *inter alia*, an increase in the number of publications in the languages which such balance would require; And also in its resolution A/59/62 on multilingualism, which I quote: underlines the need for full implementation of the resolutions establishing arrangements for the official languages of the United Nations and the working languages of the Secretariat.

We believe that multilingualism is an essential element in the outreach activities of the DPI, yet some important improvement would need to be achieved in the UN web system because in some web pages the arrangements for the official and working languages of the UN are not respected; to illustrate, since yesterday two major activities are taking place here in the UN, the 15th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Committee on Information, surprisingly the web pages of these 2 organizations are in English only.

Mr Chairman,

Kiswahili is one of the major African languages, and the only official language of the African Union, it is one of the fastest growing languages in the world - more than 100 million people speak Kiswahili. It is the official language of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and also spoken in Democratic Republic of the Congo, and parts of Burundi, the Comoros, Mozambique and Somalia.

Most of United Nations peacekeeping missions in Sub-Saharan Africa are mainly in East and Central Africa, with the largest mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The UN region office is located in Nairobi, where Swahili is the official language, and also an important number of other UN Agencies offices, including the headquarters of UN Habitat as well as the United Nations Environment Program. There is a growing need for the UN system to communicate with the people at the grassroots level. Swahili, which is spoken by almost 100 million people in that region alone, is an important vehicle for information to disseminate the message of the United Nations.

Here at the United Nation Radio, Kiswahili is the only African language to be broadcast, however it has the least amount of time. It broadcasts once weekly a thirty minutes news and

current affairs program, and one half hour of weekly feature. Other official and non-official languages have daily programs.

My delegation believes that increasing the Kiswahili program at the UN Radio service is vital in circulating important information for action on the ground.

With the habit of listening to world news through international broadcast stations which do not necessarily reflect the same goals as the UN policies and activities in the region and around the world, increasing UN news and programs in Kiswahili will be an important asset to disseminate the mission and activities of the UN East Africa and at the UN offices in Nairobi, and in the UN peacekeeping mission in the region.

Monsieur le Président,

Dans la résolution 34/182 du 18 décembre 1978, l'Assemblée Générale sur les questions relatives à l'information et je cite : Consciente de la contribution fondamentale que les moyens d'information et de communications de masse peuvent apporter à l'instauration du nouvel ordre économique international, au renforcement de la paix et de la compréhension internationale, à la réalisation de l'objectif du désarmement général et complet sous contrôle international efficace, à la promotion du respect universel des droits de l'homme et à la lutte contre le racisme, l'apartheid et le Colonialisme.

Je voudrais vous informer que depuis le 30 mars 2007, l'Autorité de régulation des communications électroniques et des postes de la République française a décidé, de façon unilatérale, de changer le code pays de l'île comorienne de Mayotte, passant de 269 à 262 (code pays de l'île de la Réunion), violant de manière flagrante la résolution 33/85 du 12 novembre 1975 qui a admis l'archipel des Comores composé des îles Mayotte, Anjouan, Mohéli et Grand Comores en tant que membre des Nations Unies.

Pour mémoire, le code pays 269 a été attribué par l'Union internationale des télécommunications (UIT) à l'archipel des Comores dès le lendemain de son accession à l'indépendance le 6 juillet 1975. Mon Gouvernement estime que l'attribution d'un « code pays France de l'Océan indien » n'est pas conforme au droit international des télécommunications et viole de façon flagrante les recommandations de l'UIT.

Mon Gouvernement condamne cette initiative et a décidé de saisir les instances internationales, notamment l'Union africaine, l'ONU et l'UIT, pour protester contre cette décision unilatérale pour défendre ses acquis, conformément au droit international. Aussi mon gouvernement est disposé à engager des négociations sur le plan de numérotation de l'île comorienne de Mayotte et le développement rapide de télécommunications dans cette partie comorienne.

Thank you for your attention.