

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Hjálmar W. Hannesson, Permanent Representative of Iceland to the United Nations (2 May 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the Committee of Information. You may be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation. I would also like to congratulate Under-Secretary-General Mr. Kiyo Akasaka on his nomination as the head of the Department of Information (DPI) and wish him all success in the important work ahead.

At the same time, I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Under-Secretary-General, and my dear friend, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, for his able leadership of the Department of Public Information for the past six years. We thank him wholeheartedly for his excellent work and the dynamism and commitment that he brought during his tenure as Under-Secretary General of the United Nations.

I would also like to express our gratitude to the Department for the reports that we have in front of us for this meeting, which provide a good overview of the activities of the Department.

Iceland expresses its appreciation for the important work of the Department of Public Information. It is driven by clearly defined communications strategies that focus on targeted audiences and on integrated use of the new information and communications technologies in promotional campaigns and outreach activities. We also take note of the current emphasis on new and innovative programmes for civil society and educational institutions. We warmly welcome the DPI's work to develop a more comprehensive and strategic approach to promoting global awareness and better understanding of the work of the United Nations in priority areas.

The UN information centres (UNIC) are key to the work of the Department of Public Information. They give its global work a local accent. My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary General on the network of UN information centres and the progress and achievements made so far in the implementation of a regional strategic communications model - by rationalizing the network of UN information centres around regional hubs. We wish to reiterate our support for this initiative and the creation of a network that more effectively addresses the needs of client audiences.

In this context, Iceland supports the work of UNICs, in particular, the UN Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels and stresses the importance of providing these offices with sufficient resources for their programme activities. The Icelandic Government financially supports the UN centre in Iceland, run by the Icelandic UN Society.

We warmly welcome the report of the Secretary General on the ongoing work of the Department to improve the UN website and make it more accessible, focusing also on webcasting, audio, video and photographic materials. The UN website is an important source of information and is growing in popularity among its users as indicated in the report. We

welcome the steps taken by the Department to make the website more accessible to people with disabilities, including people with visual and hearing disabilities. We also take note of the significant progress, outlined in the report that has been made towards reaching parity among the official languages on the website. We encourage the Department to continue these efforts.

Innovation and advances in information technology are important driving forces behind increased productivity and the creation of wealth in many parts of the world. Looking ahead, the Department of Public Information should strengthen further its efforts to meet the concerns of the Developing countries in the field of information and communication technology. The Department of Public Information can play an important role in bridging the digital divide and helping developing nations gain access to these new technologies.

Mr. Chairman,

The public outreach work of the United Nations is of great importance. Targeted and effective communication is a key tool for the United Nations in promoting global awareness and greater understanding of the UN and its work in priority areas. My delegation looks forward to working with all members of this Committee in a constructive manner to improve the effectiveness of our work.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.