

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Ajai Malhotra, Deputy Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations (2 May 2007)**

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, kindly accept my congratulations on your election as our Chair. Please do also convey our best wishes to the other office bearers on the bureau, upon their election.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made by the previous Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, and to warmly welcome his successor, Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka, and convey to him our very best wishes for every success in his important new assignment.

Our welcome also goes to the delegations of Thailand and the Dominican Republic, the two new members of this Committee. My delegation also aligns itself with the statement of the G-77, delivered earlier by the distinguished representative of Pakistan.

Mr. Chairman,

This debate provides an occasion to reiterate the central concerns of Member States over the process of dissemination of information. For us, the defining characteristic of the work of this Committee lies in its relationship with the Department of Public Information, and the ensuing cooperative effort to continually improve upon the delivery of relevant information inputs to millions of potential users across the world. Against this backdrop, I would like to briefly touch upon the following points of interest to my delegation:

Perhaps the most important issue we need to focus on is how to make the work of the Department of Information as relevant and accessible as possible to the largest number of users, enabling it to be an effective conduit for the flow of information between the UN and the peoples of the world. For this, it is essential that the widest possible spectrum of technologies be utilized. This includes the use of modern technologies, such as webcasts and podcasts, as well as cost-effective and more traditional forms of communication, such as the radio and print media, which remain of great importance in reaching out to people in parts of the developing world. Many countries simultaneously straddle several centuries in technological terms, and it is vital that the product presented by DPI is disseminated through a wide menu of media channels. While we appreciate the efforts made so far in this regard, we believe that there remains room for further improvement.

We also fully support the effort to facilitate the emergence of a more linguistically equal world, in which information is disseminated not merely in the official languages of the UN, but also in other languages. There is also merit in increasing the level of local content and local involvement in the production of programme material. Doing so will have the advantage of making information more relevant locally, while simultaneously encouraging local talent and creativity to involve itself in the work of the UN.

A related issue, Mr. Chairman, is the question of UN Information Centres, which are crucial in enhancing the public image of the UN and in disseminating its message, particularly in the developing world. We agree with the view expressed by many delegations that our goal should be to strengthen, rather than weaken, these information outposts of the United Nations. Hub and spoke models may appeal in certain managerial contexts, where local sensitivities and regional variations need not be important. However, it makes little sense to employ them in a people-intensive sector such as the media.

The argument in favour of a more relevant outreach effort by the UN is also related to the larger objective of creating more locally relevant content and greater local involvement in the work of the United Nations. This should logically also be a larger objective of the UN, since the UN will in turn become more widely relevant by virtue of being more locally accessible.

We also need to dwell on the issue of content management. We appreciate the work being done to provide information that is relevant and meaningful, while simultaneously being interesting and entertaining. This is no easy task, and efforts made in this direction have been highly creditable. However, those working on content management should never be satisfied with the status quo, but should be motivated by a constant desire for further improvement. While it is important that the DPI's programmatic products continue to cover the gamut of UN activities, such products must also improve their coverage and projection of the most significant activities of the UN, in particular, those that impact most upon the lives of people. These include humanitarian activities and the work performed, often under extremely arduous circumstances, by those who serve the UN by keeping the peace in strife-torn lands. We would continue to urge that DPI and DPKO work in tandem to further raise awareness about UN peacekeeping and highlighting peacekeeping success stories. This would go a long way towards generating goodwill and projecting a better image for the UN and its peacekeepers, both locally and globally. In this context, we welcome the creation of a Joint Public Information Working Group on developing an overall strategy to increase awareness of the achievements and challenges of the UN peacekeeping. We look forward to being kept informed about its efforts.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to assure you of India's support as you guide the work of this Committee, and also of our support to the DPI as it tackles the formidable challenges before it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.