

Statement by Mr. Hossein Maleki, Counselor, Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1 May 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset I would like to congratulate you on your election as chairman of the Committee on Information and wish you and other members of the bureau success in your endeavor to guide the Committee toward a fruitful outcome at its 2007 session.

I avail myself of this opportunity to extend my delegation's sincere felicitations to Mr. Kiyo Akasaka on his appointment as the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, and I assure him of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

I also wish to pay tribute to Mr. Shashi Tharoor, for his excellent performance as Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information during his tenure.

I associate myself with the statement made by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Pakistan on behalf of G77/China.

Mr. Chairman,

It is imperative that the voice of the United Nations as the indispensable foundation of a peaceful and just world be heard in a clear and effective manner. Its aims and activities, as envisaged in the Charter, should be brought to the attention of the peoples across the globe. In this context, we underscore the importance of the role of the Department of Public Information (DPI) as the voice of the United Nations. To strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization, we believe that this Department should provide all people with accurate, comprehensive, timely and relevant information on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in an impartial and transparent manner.

We continue to uphold the view that the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries. We appreciate the Department's past activities especially promoting issues of importance to the international community such as sustainable development, decolonization, dialogue among civilizations and culture of peace and tolerance, rights of women and children, HIV/AIDS. We therefore encourage the Department to vigorously continue working in these areas.

The Department of Public Information should also contribute to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications. This requires a strong and electronically well-equipped department. To this end, we encourage the Department, among other things, to continuously enhance its technological infrastructure.

Multilingualism is an important factor in the outreach activities of the United Nations. However, in promoting multilingualism it is necessary to fully take into account the number of audiences and their real needs in a cost-efficient manner.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to put emphasis on the vital role of the Committee on Information (COI) which has been established as a forum to, inter alia, examine United Nations public information policies and activities and to promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order. No doubt, such a goal can only be attained through free circulation and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information. The Committee is mandated to make recommendations to the General Assembly that should bring about harmony, goodwill and greater understanding among peoples by building bridges among various societies, cultures and religions.

This is particularly important at the time when the monopolized world of media is obviously hampering our common efforts to have access to the real and unbiased news and information. We believe that international community, led by the United Nations, should take necessary steps in rectifying the imbalances of the present development of information and communication technology in order to make the world of media more just, equitable and impartial. Indeed, fair, balanced and unbiased information contributes to the maintenance and promotion of world peace and security.

The digital gap between the developed and developing world is increasingly widened. Unfortunately, certain countries of the developed world are taking advantage of this situation and using their monopoly of modern communications to distort and fabricate the events and realities in developing countries, thus tarnishing the image of these countries. The case in point is the current extensive campaign by western media, through their advanced technology, against certain developing countries that fall outside the realm of their political and cultural influence. We believe that international community should spare no effort to find ways and means to put an end to this detrimental and undesirable situation in the world of global media and communication technology.

We believe that United Nations should lead an international effort aiming at creating a new world information order, based on free circulation and better balanced dissemination of information, to assist developing countries to counter misleading propaganda, distorted facts and falsified news created by the media in the West against them.

Mr. Chairman,

In our view, freedom of expression and freedom of information positively contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of all societies. However, if such freedoms do not go with responsibility to respect others' beliefs and rights, it may lead to incitement, anarchy and irrational behavior which in turn create resentment, hatred and hostility among the people of different faiths and cultures. In this regard, Iran encourages the DPI to continue its efforts in promoting respect for all cultures, religions and civilizations.

Much of the violence and hostility prevailing in today's world is emanating from prejudice born out of misunderstanding, miscommunication or simply out of a lack of communication. Therefore, we believe that promoting dialogue among civilizations as an appropriate step can

considerably contribute to better understanding and foster friendship among nations. As stipulated in the General Assembly's resolution A/RES/56/6, "the United Nations should continue to promote and strengthen the culture of dialogue among civilizations". We hope that the Secretary-General will save no effort to promote and strengthen this important internationally consensus-based idea on a continuous basis.

Mr. Chairman,

Last but not least, I wish to refer to the importance of the United Nations Information Centers (UNICs). We fully concur with the Secretary General's views contained in document A/AC.198/2007/2 that "the United Nations information centers are key to the work of the Department of Public Information, giving its global work a local accent". We believe that these centers are, indeed, the real interface between the United Nations and the international community, and if well-equipped, they can tremendously contribute to enhance the public image of the Organization, mainly in many developing countries that lack easy access to modern communication system and information technology. Thus, we request the Secretary-General to take appropriate steps to address the insufficient financial resources that negatively affect the overall performance of the United Nations Information Centers. We are thankful to the United Nations Information Center in Tehran for its considerable performance—despite the severe budget constraint — during the past years. In this connection, we support the call for allocation of adequate resources to ensure the effective and efficient functioning and strengthening of all UNICs, including, the UNIC-Tehran.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I assure you of my delegation's full support and constructive cooperation to achieve a successful outcome in this annual meeting of the Committee.

Thank you.