

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Daniel Carmon, Deputy Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations (2 May 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau on assuming the important duty of presiding over the work of this Committee.

I would also like to congratulate Under-Secretary-General Mr. Akasaka on his appointment as head of the Department of Public Information. I wish you great success in fulfilling your mission to promote the United Nations. Let me reassure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation.

At this time, I also wish to warmly reflect on and thank Mr. Shashi Tharoor, our previous head of DPI, for his remarkable work. There is no doubt that Mr. Shashi Tharoor will be remembered as an outstanding head of DPI, who constantly and tirelessly worked at making the United Nations and its message better known, appreciated, and understood around the world.

My delegation also expresses its appreciation for the cooperation between the DPI and the members of the Committee. DPI plays a substantial role in ensuring that the UN's message reaches to the far corners of the earth, and we look forward to seeing the fruits of this rewarding partnership.

My delegation commends the DPI for its many accomplishments, particularly related to the UN website and internet technologies. That one can view meetings held in this building, in a real time video feed, from anywhere in the world is truly remarkable — and yet fitting for this organization. As a former head of the Department for Information and Internet at Israel's Foreign Ministry, which, although a much smaller entity, was in the early 1990s the first Foreign Ministry to develop a website, I am personally well attuned to these advancements.

In recent years, DPI has also striven to create new partnerships across the spectrum of media and public information outlets. In doing so, DPI has established a rich infrastructure and integrated network. The multi-dimensional reach is surely impressive, and should serve as a model for other departments of the organization.

Mr. Chairman,

Two weeks ago, the State of Israel observed *Yom Hashoah*, our day of Holocaust Remembrance. It is therefore only fitting that we take this opportunity to express our praise to the DPI team for the positive outcome of the second annual International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, which took place this past January 29th, and was commemorated throughout the world. The success of the program was in large part due to the passion and enthusiasm of the DPI team.

In this regard, I am also pleased that the outreach programme on the Holocaust and the United Nations featured prominently in Mr. Akasaka's remarks about DPI's work and activities from earlier this week.

It is unfortunate, in spite all that has been done, that incitement still exists. Though the General Assembly adopted the Holocaust Remembrance Resolution last year and the resolution against Holocaust Denial this year, both with the overall consensus of Member States, some leaders still project hate rhetoric and wage campaigns of Holocaust denial. This is a deeply disturbing and dangerous phenomenon, and a signal for us that Holocaust education programmes and outreach are more important than ever.

As the Holocaust transforms from memory into history, it remains our duty to pass the torch of remembrance to the next generation. The United Nations was created out of the ashes of the Holocaust, and hence it is appropriate that the organization has taken it upon itself to educate the world about the great atrocities of the Holocaust, and to apply and teach its universal lessons so that we will never forget.

In this regard, the UN's outreach programme plays an integral role. I would like to reiterate our warm anticipation for the continuation of such outreach programs and activities within the UN system and within educational systems of Member States. We look forward to seeing other variations of the programme, at headquarters in New York and in UN centers and campuses around the world.

On another subject, Mr. Chairman, allow me to address, once again, a matter of concern, which is part of our continuous dialogue with the DPI, regarding its implementation of the General Assembly resolutions on the Palestinian Information Programme. This program, by its very definition, promotes a one-sided narrative. In the past, we recognized Under-Secretary General Tharoor's efforts to make the seminars and materials emanating from the DPI as objective as possible. However, as a result of the Palestinian Information Programme, Israel continues to be the only Member State that is the target of such political bias. Especially at this time of reform and revitalization of the UN's work, we believe this program should be substituted in due time with a more balanced and constructive joint effort concerning peace in the Middle East, aimed at the promotion of tolerance, peace education, mutual understanding, and the prevention of incitement.

Mr. Chairman,

Tomorrow, we commemorate World Press Freedom Day. We would like to reiterate our commitment to a free press and the crucial role it plays in democratic society. We commend the protections given to the practice of a free press, and condemn the oppressive controls imposed on it in some areas in the world. We urge the DPI to use its resources and energy to foster the former and combat the latter. Indeed, people are only as free as the information transmitted around them.

In this regard, we are deeply troubled by the spate of abuse and violence directed at journalists in our region - and around the world. We continue to call for freedom of the press, and for their protection and safety from harms way.

Mr. Chairman,

Israel is proud to have been a member of the COI for a number of years, and we are once again participating in this discussion with the hope that our call for greater fairness and evenhandedness will be heard and heeded.

In a world where the internet and technology has been used to harm and endanger, it is refreshing to see how the DPI has harnessed the power of communication technology for the greater good. Israel remains committed to constructive and cooperative conduct of these deliberations and a positive outcome to our work.

Thank you.