

Statement by H.E. Mr. Raymond Wolfe, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations (1 May 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

From the outset, let me congratulate you and the other Members of the Bureau on your election and convey my delegation's best wishes on your stewardship during the 29th session of the Committee on Information. My delegation is confident that under your astute guidance, this year's session of the Committee will achieve a positive outcome. Please be assured of the full cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of your duties.

Let me also use this opportunity to congratulate the new Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Public Information, Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka, on his recent appointment to the post and thank him for his very informative and comprehensive briefing. The DPI is also to be commended for the quality of the reports which will provide the Committee with a solid foundation for the fulfilment of its mandate.

Jamaica aligns itself with the Statement delivered by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, but wishes to elaborate on a number of issues which are of particular significance to us.

Mr. Chairman,

As the voice of the United Nations, Jamaica believes that the DPI has an indispensable role in promoting a positive public image of the Organisation and providing a vital link between the UN and the global populace. As such, we welcome the emphasis being placed by the DPI on employing a more strategic approach in the execution of its mandate, which reflects its desire to adapt to the changing times. In this connection, we welcome the increased coordination between the DPI and other areas of the UN as the importance of speaking with one voice must be emphasised.

We are pleased that the Department's efforts to further improve its outreach have been bearing fruit, given the feedback over the past year from educators and students. We take due note of the various media efforts being undertaken by the DPI in engaging the public on important issues such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the High-level dialogue on International Migration and Development and the question of Palestine. We note also the critical role being played by the DPI in UN peacekeeping given the exponential increase in the number of conflicts and the sustained surge in UN peacekeeping in recent years, which have turned the global spotlight on this important area of the UN operations. We specially commend the DPI for the role that it played in the events commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade on 26th March 2007 and look forward to the Department's continued support as we undertake other activities to mark the year.

We are heartened by the increasing number of visits to the website over the last few years, with a record average of over 1 million daily in 2006. This could be attributed in part to the

growing awareness of the UN and its work in global affairs. The Jamaican delegation supports the efforts of the DPI to attain parity of all official languages. In this regard, we are pleased that a recruitment drive is currently underway to boost the current staff complement. We are also satisfied with the innovative tools being employed by the Department to make the website more accessible and user-friendly.

Although it is widely acknowledged that the internet is a critical component in this information age, the use of traditional media is imperative as radio remains an essential medium of communication particularly in developing countries. It is against this background that my delegation welcomes the emphasis being placed by UN Radio on increasing its listenership in various parts of the world including in the Caribbean and Africa, and improving its interactivity. We recognise the need to expand our outreach. As such, we support the DPI's efforts to continue to produce programmes in non-official languages in light of the fact that, a vast portion of the global population speaks none of the 6 official languages.

Mr. Chairman,

The Jamaican delegation maintains the view that the presence of the United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) in developing countries not only serves to strengthen the flow of information in these countries, but also assists in addressing the disparities faced by developing countries in the areas of access to information and information technology. Whilst we are cognisant of the need for adjustments to the modus operandi in relation to the network of UNICs, we believe that this should not be to the detriment of those who have limited or no access to sophisticated forms of information technology.

We note with interest, the success achieved so far by the UN Communications Group at the local level in conveying a coherent message of the UN as a unique, multifaceted Organisation. In this regard, the partnerships being forged between the information centres and local civil groups and NGOs in host countries will, without doubt, help to highlight the relevance of the UN and its work to the common man.

We also note with interest that a number of host governments including Trinidad and Tobago, have made generous extra-budgetary contributions to reduce the maintenance costs for premises of UNICs in their countries. The information centre in Port of Spain, as is well known, services ten CARICOM States in the Eastern and Southern Caribbean. We therefore continue to reiterate the importance of the establishment of the enhanced information component in the UNDP office in Kingston which will complement the work being undertaken by the UNIC in Port of Spain.

Mr. Chairman,

In concluding, permit me to assure you of the full support and cooperation of my delegation of the work of this Committee and the DPI in the quest to disseminate, in a clear and objective manner, the message of peace. I thank you.