

Statement by the Outgoing Chairman of the Committee on Information, H.E. Mr. Mihnea Motoc, at the Opening of the 29th Session of the Committee on Information (30 April 2007)

Mr. Chairman,
Under-Secretary-General Akasaka,

At the onset of the COI's 29th session, and as I handed over its Chairmanship in the able hands of our Swiss colleague, Mr. Rudolf Christen, allow me a few succinct remarks.

It is, of course, not up to me to evaluate my Chairmanship; I do, however, wish to say that these past two years have provided me with an excellent opportunity to witness first hand this leading Department of the UN Secretariat, which is the Department of Public Information, delivering on its delicate and complex mandate entrusted by the membership; I have seen it endeavoring to reform, I have seen it endeavoring to speak out for the UN, and, I trust you agree it is never easy to advertise something that does good.

These have been 2 rewarding years, for the rapport the Committee had with DPI has truly been one of sheer partnership. This is how we managed to overcome challenges that were not few, complicated processes such as the regionalization of the network of United Nations information centers.

I had a great predecessor, Ambassador Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury of Bangladesh, not surprisingly now serving his country as Foreign Advisor, and accordingly a sound platform of meaningful interaction and concertation with the DPI to build upon. I was supported by a great Bureau, made up of wonderful representatives from Morocco, Argentina, Switzerland, as Vice-Chairs, and Bangladesh, as Rapporteur. The dedicated staff of DPI not only performed highly effective Secretariat functions for the Committee, but were also displaying in the process a most remarkable teamwork. I should like to believe that the valuable secretary for the Committee, Ms. Paula Refolo, knows how much I feel grateful to her for sound professionalism and huge personal qualities.

Above all, I can safely say that the Under-Secretary-General with whom we worked, Shashi Tharoor, has always been more than our foremost interlocutor; he has truly been a source of professional and personal inspiration in our work.

I have a special mention for the opportunities we had during the outgoing Bureau's tenure, to meet interested media, primarily those covering the UN story, and to get valuable, sometimes sobering, but always inspiring, feedback from them.

Instead of farewell, I would like to state my entire confidence that the Bureau that has just been inaugurated will carry on to further horizons the job of the Committee, capitalizing on the same virtues of the collegiate approach and of consensus-building.

I take the opportunity to wholeheartedly congratulate Mr. Rudolf Christen for the assumption of the important position of COI Chairman; he already possesses a wealth of UN public

information-related experience, and he has been a tremendous support for my own tenure; we are in very capable hands under his leadership. The new Bureau, the election of which I warmly applaud, combines continuity with fresh spirit. I wish them an accomplished tenure; this is more than a formality on my side, since, with the concurrence of the Eastern European Group, Romania will continue to serve in the Bureau, as one of the Vice-Chairs, in the person of a diplomat I readily gave full confidence to, Emilian Morar.

There is a new leadership at the helm of DPI; Under-Secretary-General Kiyoo Akasaka not only brought to the UN the skills of a top diplomat for his great country, but also the experience of a very senior international civil servant who had covered so many subject matters. More importantly so, he has an impressive vision for the department as the voice for the UN, and this augurs well for the upcoming sessions of the COI.

The membership of the COI constantly expands. It is with particular satisfaction that I salute the accession of the Dominican Republic and Thailand to our Committee, and appreciate by the same token the contribution they are going to make to the latter's proceedings.

This prompts me to estimate that the Committee itself could, and should, endeavor to do more, primarily by supporting and facilitating that task of the DPI which is the most daunting, and against which the Department's performance is ultimately measured, that is telling the UN story to a world that is more hurried and less prone to idealism, than ever.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.