

Statement by H.E. Mr. Farukh Amil, Acting Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, and Chairman of the Group of 77 and China (30 April 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

It is a singular privilege for me to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the Commencement of the twenty ninth session of the Committee on Information.

Allow me to begin by extending my warmest felicitations to His Excellency Mr. Kiyo Akasaka on his appointment as the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. With your known diplomatic skills, vast experience, wisdom and administrative prowess, we have every confidence that under your stewardship the Department of Public Information will attain new heights, and continue to work more effectively as the public voice of the United Nations.

I would be remiss if I failed to appreciate the contributions of your predecessor Mr. Shashi Tharoor who has worked diligently and energetically to project the activities of the United Nations in building its image.

The cornerstone of DPI's policies on Public Information is close cooperation between the Department and the Committee on Information. In the past the partnership was put on a solid foundation. We hope that under the able guidance of Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, this tradition will continue and grow further.

I would like to record my appreciation for the officers and staff of the Department of Public Information who have worked strenuously to carry out the mandate of the Department.

Mr. Chairman,

Please also accept our felicitations on your election to Chair the Committee on Information. The Group of 77 and the Bureau wishes you all success in guiding the Committee to a successful conclusion.

We welcome the Dominican Republic and Thailand as members of the Committee on Information.

The Group appreciates the comprehensive presentation by the Under Secretary General, Mr. Kiyo Akasaka. We are grateful to him for providing an update of the Departments activities during the past year and for giving us a fuller sense of the continuing challenges.

The G-77 and China has taken note of the report of Secretary General on the activities of the Department of Public Information (DPI).

The most daunting task before DPI is to reach out to the widest possible audiences. Many countries lack the resources and technical means to access information regarding UN activities and achievements. The United Nations is a universal forum where the issues and

concerns faced by the world community are debated. A faithful and balanced coverage of the deliberations, decisions and actions of the UN can help promote greater understanding and goodwill.

The DPI's role is challenging. Given the media's tendency to sensationalize "bad news" — the positive public image of the organization -with a few exceptions- remains the dominant public image in Member States and world public opinion. It is therefore critical to continuously and actively project the UN's ideals and accomplishments, intensify outreach and transmit the UN's message to peoples in all Member States.

Mr. Chairman

The Group of 77 and China appreciates the work of DPI in promoting issues of importance to the International Community such as UN reforms, climate change, immigration and development, world information society day, training of journalists, promote new partnership for Africa's development, preventing genocide, alliance of civilizations, violence against children, Millennium Development Goals, Peacekeeping Operations, Counter Terrorism and launching of report on High Level Panel on system-wide coherence.

While disseminating statements of Senior UN officials on reform issues, it is equally important to project the position and perspectives of the member states. The Group hopes that DPI's communication campaign would reflect this essential balance as the debates on reform issues evolves.

Mr. Chairman

The Group of G-77 and China takes note of the report of Secretary General on the Network of United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) activities and strategic direction. We urge that all possible measures be taken to strengthen the United Nations Information Centres. These Centres are a vital source for the flow of information. They help to bridge the gap between the developed and developing economies in terms of access to information and communication technologies. We also support the call for allocation of adequate resources to ensure the effective functioning and strengthening of UN Information Centres. The G-77 and China wish to underline that any decision pertaining to reorganization of UNICs must be made in close consultation with the host countries, and it must take into account the geographical, linguistic and technological characters of different regions.

The Group of 77 and China is fully cognizant of the enormity of the task and the efforts being made by DPI to grapple with the goal of achieving parity among the official languages. The Group of 77 and China takes note of the Secretary General's report on the United Nations website: progress towards parity among official languages, accessibility and content management. The daily use of the UN website by millions around the world is impressive. However, there is still a long way to go in bridging the "digital divide". The Internet, despite its increased use in developing countries cannot be relied upon for effective transmission of messages in the developing world. We would need to continue to rely on traditional means of

communication - particularly radio - in reaching populations in far flung and remote areas of the world.

The Group welcomes the creation of a joint public information working group with focus on developing an overall strategy to increase awareness of the achievements and challenges of United Nations Peacekeeping. The Group continues to underscore the importance of closer co-operation between the DPI and other substantive Departments in particular the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). UN Peacekeepers invariably work in very challenging conditions and often produce huge "success" stories for the United Nations. It is important therefore, that this part of the story is told both globally and locally. For this, the two Departments should collaborate to ensure that the objectives of DPKO are well known to the communities they are set to secure.

In conclusion, we reiterate our support to the DPI and its endeavors to effectively carry out its mandate and also reassure you, Mr. Chairman, of our fullest co-operation. In addition we reiterate the commitment of the Group to work constructively with other member states in sharing the Committee's work to a successful conclusion.

Thank you.