

Statement by Mr. Lee Do-hoon, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations (1 May 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your assumption of the Chairmanship of this Committee. I also wish to thank your predecessor, Mr. Mihnea Ioan Motoc, for his commendable service during previous session. In addition my delegation would like to extend a cordial welcome to the new Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the work of the Department of Public Information (DPI) in informing the world about the values and activities of the United Nations. The UN can realize its policy goals more effectively by gaining the support of the global public. To help sustain and build that support, the DPI should make every effort to provide relevant information effectively to an ever wider and more diverse audience.

In this regard, my delegation supports the recent efforts of the DPI to better structure its operations. We are encouraged by positive steps such as defining goals and target audiences, making use of new information and communications technologies, and systematically evaluating its activities and productions.

The work of the DPI is particularly important in the field of peacekeeping. With the increasing role of UN peacekeeping operations in mitigating regional conflicts, it is imperative for the DPI to establish an effective communications and public information system to cope with unexpected communications crises and to gain public support for UN activities from within the region as well as in the wider world.

With regard to the rationalization of the network of United Nations Information Centres (UNICs), my delegation believes that UNICs play an important role as regional public information hubs. We view the network of UNICs as highly useful tool for delivering regionally relevant messages and maximizing the impact of public information.

The DPI's recent progress in rationalizing the UNICs is praiseworthy, in this regard. Nevertheless, we point out that rationalization is not an end in itself, but rather a means to attain the long-term objective of providing UN information to an increasing range of audiences around the world. In line with this goal, we believe that UNICs are most useful to those communities where information technologies are not readily available or where one of the six official UN languages is not widely spoken. Accordingly, we hope the rationalization of the UNICs will be implemented in a manner that enhances the Organization's outreach to those Member States currently outside the scope of the field information capacity of the DPI.

Concerning the United Nations website, my delegation recognizes that it has been a highly successful medium for delivering UN public information in recent years and we encourage

continued improvement. We note the efforts of the DPI to foster parity among the six official languages and to enhance accessibility and content management, and we see these efforts as closely interrelated. My delegation believes that the DPI should also pay due attention to improving website accessibility for the disabled. Given the limited resources, my delegation feels that the most practical approach to website enhancement is to focus on the most widely used languages while setting guidelines to ensure access for the disabled.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by expressing our deep appreciation for the DPI's vigorous efforts and significant progress in enhancing the public information activities of the United Nations and rationalizing the UNICs as detailed in the Secretary-General's reports A/AC.198/2007/2 and A/AC.198/2007/4. At this time of new leadership at the United Nations, the international community has high expectations for the enlarged role of the Organization. To meet these hopes, fulfil its responsibilities and achieve its goals, the United Nations must ensure that it gains the support of the peoples of the world through clear and relevant communication.

Thank you.