

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam, Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations(2 May 2007)

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you on your election to chair this Committee and also to other members of the bureau. My delegation looks forward to working closely with you and your bureau in all your endeavours. I also wish to extend sincere thanks of appreciation to Ambassador Motoc of Romania for his leadership and to the members of the previous bureau for their hard work.

May I extend my warm felicitation to His Excellency Mr. Kiyo Akasaka on his appointment as the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information? I wish Mr. Akasaka all success in fulfilling his mission of giving voice to the United Nations and its activities and look forward to work with him to obtain a greater profile for the UN, worldwide. I would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank Mr. Shashi Tharoor for his diligent work in order to project the image of the United Nations around the globe.

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

My delegation wishes to align itself with the Statement made by the delegation of Pakistan on behalf of the G-77 and China.

Sri Lanka commends DPI for its efforts to develop more strategic approach in promoting global awareness and greater understanding of the work of the UN. My delegation appreciates the work of the DPI in promoting issues of importance to the international community such as Human rights, International Migration and Development, illicit trafficking of Small Arms, Millennium Development Goals, Peacekeeping, Counter-Terrorism, and humanitarian relief, among others.

Many developing countries lack the resources and technical means to access information including UN activities and achievements. And some developing countries are information-isolated, and few can afford to update their knowledge bases. In this regard, we reckon that the Internet speeds up communication, increases the radius of contact, and reduces needs of local libraries and paper publications. Internet promises extraordinary opportunities for developing countries although not sufficient to close to the knowledge gap. In this context, the UN websites are an essential tool by which the DPI can improve accessibility for wider population through use of local languages. At present only 34 languages are reportedly used by UN information centres worldwide. In this regard we underscore the importance of including more languages in particular from Asia in DPI local websites. However, use of internet does not reduce the need to address the information gap by providing facilities through widely accessible traditional forms of communication such as radio, newspapers, etc., locally.

My delegation wishes to underscore the importance of the United Nations Information Services and Centres as a bridge for relaying information between the UN and the public on ground. These centres without any doubt are a vital source for the flow of information to grass

root level. In this regard my delegation wishes to emphasize the need to use local resources and capacities both human and material in the work of UN on the ground. In addition there is need to empower and promote local contributions in both of intellectual and social terms in order to formulate the message of the UN more acceptable and understood at the local level, in particular in countries with long held traditions and historical experiences. This effort must bear in mind local sensitivities and aspirations in the context of universal values and norms that UN will always uphold. We re-emphasize the value and contribution made by local professional at the UN information centre.

My delegation appreciates the efforts of the DPI in providing specific support for the UN peacekeeping operations in the field by developing and implementing a strategy to assist peacekeeping operations. In this regard we welcome closer cooperation between the DPI and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. It is of vital importance for the UN as well as the member States that the success stories of the peace keeping are being told globally and locally.

In conclusion let me reiterate my delegations fullest support for the DPI to carry out its mandate successfully and also for the work of the Committee.

I thank you.