

Statement by Mr. Simon Pidoux, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations (1 May 2007)

Mr. President,

I would like to endorse the thanks expressed by my distinguished colleagues to the outgoing office and to Mr. Shashi Tharoor for the work that they have done. My delegation also congratulates Under-Secretary-General Akasaka on his appointment. Mr. President, finally I would like to add my voice to the congratulations on your election. I assure you of Switzerland's full support with your task of managing the work of the 29th session of the Information Committee.

Mr. President,

My delegation thanks Deputy Secretary General Mr. Kiyoo Akasaka for his presentation of the different reports and for highlighting the key points. Switzerland would also like to commend the excellent work of the Department of Public Information, which has successfully tackled the challenges related to the very full agenda of the past year. I am referring to the information tasks in the framework of the creation of the Human Rights Council in Geneva and of its first months of activity.

Continuing efforts to improve

Mr. President,

Following the phase of partial reorientation within the Department of Public Information in previous years, we are convinced that the task now is to respond constantly to the rapid developments in the media world so that the DPI can offer its clients the best possible products, thus ensuring a wide dissemination of information about the work of the United Nations. We are very pleased about the continuing efforts to bring about improvements and we welcome in particular the creation of communications groups at the national level. The establishment of focal points responsible for information on the United Nations at the local level conforms perfectly to the logic of greater coherence in the United Nations system.

The redeployment and the reinforcement of the resources of information centres close to the major media foci seem to us to be very promising. After Cairo, Mexico and Pretoria, Switzerland encourages the implementation of such measures in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. It is necessary to learn positive as well as negative lessons from these experiences and to adopt measures that can bring about improvements at the same time as taking account of specific regional aspects.

On the other hand we consider it to be very important that the different centres should be able to base their work on a mission and on objectives clearly defined by the Department of Public Information. These aspects will also make it possible to define the respective competences more effectively, to measure the results achieved and if need be to make any necessary modifications.

My delegation has also noted with satisfaction the many partnerships that the DPI has established with civil society. The Department of Public Information, while maintaining its independence, can only benefit from this type of collaboration. However, instead of accumulating such partnerships, often created for the implementation of one-off events, would it not be desirable for the DPI to create a network between these different partners and thus to stimulate exchanges, activities and results?

Mr. President,

The efforts to bring about improvements also apply to the work of this committee. It seems to us that it would also be possible to reduce the number of reports asked to the secretariat.

UN Internet site, new technologies, multilingualism

My delegation welcomes the improvements to the Internet site and considers this to be an effective instrument for disseminating information about the United Nations. The excellent work of the team producing the Internet site is reflected in the quality of the end product. We encourage the Department to coordinate its work with the information services of the Management Department in order that they may mutually benefit from their respective skills. Given the importance of the Internet site, we encourage the DPI to continue its efforts to attain linguistic parity of the content of this Internet site in the different official languages of the United Nations. As a country with four national languages, Switzerland naturally favours multilingualism and advocates a pragmatic approach, combining the effectiveness of a language of communication with the need for as widespread a use as possible of the official UN languages.

As for new technologies, Switzerland supports the efforts of the Department. We noted with interest the investment in three large format plasma screens which are to be installed in UN headquarters. My delegation considers an investment in webcasting to be equally important as this may enable the UN to reach a wider audience at the same time as stressing, as underlined in the report, the values of transparency and openness to which the UN is strongly attached.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, I would like to assure you that Switzerland will actively pursue the search for constructive solutions with a view to ensuring the success of the 29th session of the Committee on Information.

Thank you.