

Statement by Mr. Pravit Chaimongkol, Chargé d'affaires, a.i., Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations (30 April 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

From the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your election to chair this Committee, and also to other members of bureau on their elections. I have complete trust that you would lead all of us to achieve a successful and fruitful conclusion of the meeting. I also wish to express my heartfelt recognition to Ambassador Motoc of Romania for his leadership and to members of the previous bureau for their hard work.

Furthermore, I would like to congratulate Mr. Kiyotaka Akasaka, the new Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, for his appointment, and to thank him for his comprehensive briefing on the work and activities carried out by the Department of Public Information (DPI). I am certain that, under your able stewardship, you will guide the DPI to the right direction with a clear path. Also, please register our gratitude and respect to your predecessor, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, for his active leadership and administrative proficiency, especially during the time of transformation of the DPI.

I would like to take this opportunity, since Thailand participates in the meeting for the first time as member of the Committee on Information, to express gratitude for the support of all Committee's members for our appointment to the Committee. My congratulations also go to the Dominican Republic which joins the Committee as a full member at the same time with Thailand.

The Thai delegation aligns our statement with the statement of Pakistan made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

Thailand, as observer, had previously participated in the work of the Committee on Information with great interest for many years. We have witnessed the growing and changing of the Department of Public Information and the world. My delegation would like to commend the DPI in taking up the Committee's recommendations to improve its performance and reform itself. Our thanks also goes to DPI officers and staff for their vigorous work making the Department a faithful public voice of the UN and better serve the global community.

Information has long been considered as a tool for power and it is the power in itself. The United Nations has been facing numerous challenges, two of which are to make the general public understand organization and its relevance to an ever increasingly challenging modern world, and maintain the organization's connection to the people throughout the world. Despite being considered as "soft challenge" by many people, sending message across is, perhaps, the most important task of the UN as an organization, since we rely on the support of member states and, most importantly, on the people who would judge the UN by its performance, effectiveness and relevance to the society. Successes of the UN work, no matter how successful it is and how diligent the organization has been, can be crushingly overshadowed

by bad news, rumours and scandals. It is not only that we need to right the wrong, create accountability and do away with impunity, but we also need to deliver the good news, fact and right messages to make known of the success, effectiveness, efficiency, credibility and accountability of the work and the organization itself. Put simply, the general public needs to have understanding about the UN and how its work has impacts on their lives.

Mr. Chairman,

During the sixty-first General Assembly meeting of the Fourth Committee, Thailand made statement on behalf of the ten members of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) urging the DPI to continue its efforts in building partnership with other entities in the UN system, NGOs, academics and the civil society. Thailand would also like to reiterate the importance of the partnership with international, national and local media. In order to reach out to the widest possible audiences in all member states with effectiveness and efficiency, the DPI needs assistance and support of those partners so that the messages of the UN can be disseminated to the people as far and wide as it could. Not only would the UN need to eliminate language disparity between the six official languages, but it would also need to reach out to the areas where official languages may not be able to operate. Partnership with the media, local media in particular, would be very beneficial for the delivery of accurate and up-to-date news and information in local languages.

My delegation is of the view that the UN should continue its endeavour to improve communication capacity. It is an ongoing process that must never end. Newer and better technologies are invented everyday. The Internet which was once excitedly hailed as a new globalizing communication technology but now prevalingly common in daily life may help the UN to accomplish its outreach objective. The UN website is an essential tool which the DPI has to maintain and improve with full parity among the UN official languages and for accessibility of all people with or without disabilities. However, it should be noted that the gap of information and communication continues to strikingly exist between and within the vast segments of the areas and populations. This needs to be resolved. The gap needs to be bridged. Furthermore, traditional mediums, such as radio, television and print media, remain the most accessible form of communication. It would be imprudent to rely entirely on modern technology whereas simple and affordable means could also be employed in a cost-effective manner. Thailand would like the DPI to ensure that international radio broadcasting continue to be an integral part of its activities.

Moreover, my delegation could not be remiss to emphasize the importance of the United Nations Information Services (UNIS) and Centres (UNICs) as a bridge of information between the UN and the local public on the ground. As we have just reiterated earlier that this gap needs to be bridged and, thus far, UNIS and UNICs have helped play a part in narrowing down the space. It is in the best interest of all member states that UNIS and UNICs continue their work with proactive policy and further activities with the public. They should also be provided with sufficient financial and human resources so as to function with effectiveness.

Mr. Chairman,

Thailand wishes to take opportunity to express appreciation to the DPI in its efforts to promote issues of importance to the international community, for instance the UN work to promote peace, development and human rights, the Millennium Development Goals, eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, disarmament, decolonization, humanitarian relief, HIV/AIDS and other diseases, terrorism, and dialogue among civilizations and culture of peace and tolerance to enhance understanding among countries and peoples. Thailand would also like to encourage the DPI to work closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), especially from the planning stage of peacekeeping operations missions which have become far more complicated and multidimensional to providing support to the actual operations in the field.

My delegation attaches great importance to the long-term improvement of quality and sustainable development of the future generations. We are impressed to have seen the DPI paying added attention and taking creative steps to reach educators and young people. The future of this world is undoubtedly important for all of us. The tasks of ensuring the global prosperity lie in our hands now and in the hands of the next generations in the future. We do not only have the responsibility to create safe, stable and peaceful environment for them, but we also have the duty to prepare them for the future. The UN as an international organization has a role to play in this regard. The UN has the opportunity to provide them with news and information, raise their awareness of issues of global concerns, guide them to the right direction, teach them on ways to improve the quality of life, and educate them on the shared values of peace, respect and tolerance.

Mr. Chairman,

In December last year, Thailand celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of our membership to the UN. A series of events were organized to commemorate the auspicious occasion including the open exhibition about the UN and its activities and the firm relationship between the organization and the country, which was well and widely received by the general public in Thailand. We highly appreciate the excellent cooperation between the Thai Government and UNIS in perfecting the celebration. It is in our opinion that this type of collaboration should be supported as a good model for cooperation on public information between member states and the UN.

By the same token, Mr. Chairman, Thailand wishes to affirm our full support for the Committee and the DPI. We pledge to participate in the work of the Committee to help contribute to the strengthening of the connection between the UN and the people around the world. We look forward to working closely with the Committee's bureau and members in years to come.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.