



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA



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STATEMENT BY

MR. MOSES SAYELA WALUBITA

FIRST SECRETARY

**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT THE

**THE THIRTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE
COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION**

New York
May 7, 2009

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to join other delegations in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the 31st session of the Committee on Information (COI). My congratulations also go to all the members of the bureau. I pledge the full support of my delegation to your efforts. We are confident that under your able leadership you will steer this session to a successful conclusion.

My delegation also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his useful report contained in document A/AC.198/2009/2 which I found instructive.

From the outset, I wish to align my delegation with the statement made by the distinguished Representative of Sudan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

This session is very significant to my delegation as it is our maiden participation in the work of this important Committee.

Speaking for the first time in this Committee, I wish to assure you of my Government's commitment to work with the rest of the international community, in particular, the Department of Public Information (DPI) to strengthen the visibility of the work of the United Nations.

Zambia as host to United Nations Information Centre that covers Botswana, Malawi and Swaziland, is a strong supporter and beneficiary of the services that the field office of the DPI provides.

From Zambia's experience, it clear that the DPI and its country offices are of vital importance to Member States in the quest to implement the various mandates that are bestowed on it by the General Assembly and the Security Council.

It is in this context that my delegation strongly supports the statement delivered by the Under-Secretary-General Mr. Kiyo Akasaka before this Committee. The DPI can only effectively carry out its mandate with the support of Member States in providing the required resources to that effect.

Mr. Chairman,

I am reminded of a statement by writer, journalist and television commentator, John A. Barnes, who described vision, quite simply, as a way of spelling out for your listeners, "the big picture", to help them understand the effort in which they are engaged and win their "buy in". I quote: "Often overlooked is the power of vision to motivate your listeners. Vision provides the essential "spark" that makes the difference between

people who are just going through the motions and people who are really trying to achieve something.”

In this regard to achieve indeed is what DPI should vie for to continue to enhance its work. My delegation is glad that guided by the decisions of the Member States and the vision of the Secretary-General, DPI's communication priorities for this year centre on the United Nations' development agenda, including the Millennium Development Goals, peace and security, human rights, climate change, and disarmament and non-proliferation.

The financial and economic crisis, including the promotion of the General Assembly high-level conference on this issue, next month, has been added to DPI's list of priorities. As the Under-Secretary-General stated in his comprehensive presentation on the activities of DPI, to better design and sharpen its communication strategies to reach and engage the world's publics, information and communication technologies have dramatically changed the world.

It is for this reason that while the availability of instant information has required the DPI to enhance its capacity to deliver United Nations public information effectively and efficiently, a lot more remains to be done particularly in capacity-building.

Speaking for host countries of the United Nations Information Centres, I wish to thank the DPI in its pro-active roles to equip the centres with modern equipment.

The centre in Lusaka in this regard has been a beacon of the United Nations in our sub -region since its establishment in 1975. It is through its activities that my country's role in the United Nations received support of many Zambians at a time when the country hosted refugees from countries that were either to under colonial rule in Southern Africa. The story of Zambia's support to national liberation movements is also the story of the DPI.

Mr. Chairman,

Through the DPI, Zambia worked with the United Nations to garner international support for the struggle against apartheid and colonialism in our region. It was against this background that the Zambian Government from the beginning offered rent-free and tax-free accommodation to the United Nations Information Centre in our region. I am glad to inform you that this policy has been sustained over the years. It is my hope that other countries can continue providing rent-free accommodation to DPI to enhance the role of the United Nations around the world.

Furthermore, Zambia has witnessed the growth of the media since the liberalization of the industry in 1991. I am glad to report that the country has a vibrant public and private media. While the print media has stagnated, the electronic media has recorded an impressive growth. The problems the print media is facing can be attributed

to many factors including a poor reading culture, poor financial capabilities of individuals to spare money for newspaper and escalating costs of printing materials, most of which are imported.

Mr. Chairman,

The Zambian Government has on many occasions reaffirmed that freedom of expression and access to information are indispensable to any viable democratic society such as my country because they facilitate dialogue, which fosters deeper understanding of many challenges we face today. In this regard, the media has the power and responsibility to facilitate dialogue among the various stakeholders by providing a platform for people to express themselves on issues that affect them while providing information to help them make informed decisions. This in turn facilitates mutual understanding and reconciliation.

During this year's launch of the World Press Freedom Day Commemoration, under the theme "Potential of the media in fostering dialogue, mutual understanding and reconciliation," the activities on this important media day in Zambia included a national Stakeholders' Conference where key presentations around the international theme were delivered by experts in different disciplines. Additionally, radio discussions and print media publications had been conducted to further raise awareness of the media and May 3.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, my delegation would like to believe that all Member States have a shared vision of how DPI can and should continue to be a vital instrument to mobilize the international community to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves. These goals as eloquently presented by various delegations can only be achieved with all countries would in unison provide the DPI with the support it requires.

I thank you.