

Statement by Minister Mian Jahangir Iqbal (24 April 2012)

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating the two new members of the Bureau on assumption of their offices. It is a matter of great pleasure to see you presiding over the 34th session of the Committee on Information (COI). We are confident that under your able guidance, this important committee will achieve optimum results. We assure you of our complete cooperation in making this session a success.

We also commend the valuable work done by the Department of Public Information (DPI), which has worked strenuously to carry out its mandate in letter and spirit.

Mr. Chairman,

We associate ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Algeria on behalf of Group of 77 and China.

We have heard with great interest the statement made by Acting Head of Department of Communication and Public Information, Mr. Maher Nasser, in which he gave the Member States a comprehensive account of the activities of the Department of Public Information (DPI).

We would also like to commend the significant contribution made by Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, former Head of DPI, towards improving the overall working of the DPI.

Mr. Chairman,

We live in a world of dizzying information flow that has set off an intense competition among media outlets. In this environment of information flow, getting a message across is a challenge. At the same time modern technology and the internet has opened up unprecedented possibilities of connectivity and outreach. In this regard the DPI's work as the public face and voice of the UN is commendable. It has also synergized traditional and new media technologies. Without traditional means of communication, the message of the UN will not reach the world's poorest populations, particularly in developing countries. The new media, on the other hand provides a dynamic asset both in terms of improving the networking capacity of the Organization and of providing timely information to a varied array of actors.

Mr. Chairman,

Pakistan attaches high importance to UN Peacekeeping missions across the globe. As one of the largest troop-contributors for the peacekeeping operations, Pakistan would continue to play its role in promoting global peace and security. We urge the DPI to continue lending its support to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support for raising awareness of the new ground realities, far-reaching successes and challenges of peacekeeping operations. Pakistan welcomes peacekeeping website available in the six official languages and in this regard appreciates joint effort of DPI and DPKO-DFS.

Mr. Chairman,

The importance of the work of United Nations Information Centers (UNICs) around the world cannot be over-emphasized. These Centers, which are the eyes and ears of the UN, are a vital source of information and greatly help to bridge the gap between the developed and developing countries in terms of access to information and communication technologies. We, therefore, urge the DPI to allocate adequate resources for UNICs to ensure their effective functioning, particularly in the developing countries. We also urge DPI to consider restoring full services at the UNIC in Islamabad. To secure rent-free premises for UNICs from host countries, it is important that the economic conditions of those countries should also be taken into considerations while ensuring full allocation of financial support for the Centers.

We welcome DPI's efforts to make available U.N. publications and translated information material in 39 local languages, including Urdu, while maintaining websites in 29 of those languages. These steps ensure the spread of the United Nations message of peace to all corners of the world. We also appreciate the live coverage of the meetings of the Security Council, the general debate in the General Assembly, daily press briefing and other major events at the UN Headquarters and abroad through UN webcast.

Mr. Chairman,

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right which needs to be promoted and protected. But it should not be abused to create fissures between various cultures, civilizations and religions. The Committee has a central role to ensure that the UN public information policies are geared towards forging greater harmony and mutual respect among peoples belonging to various societies, cultures and religions.

We also emphasize the importance of accurate, objective and balanced news and information services in print, radio, television and over the Internet, while emphasizing the need to continue strengthening technology, multilingualism and partnerships in all those areas. We support the continuation of outreach to civil society, efforts to improve access to library services and a wide range of other initiatives.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome any initiative which helps in strengthening training programmes for the media persons from developing countries. In this context, we appreciate the annual Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists Fellowship Programme and request the DPI to consider expanding the number of scholarships.

Mr. Chairman,

The Democratic Government of Pakistan is committed to freedom of expression and free media. Pakistan is among the countries where media enjoys complete freedom. As a result of the Government's media-friendly policies, there is an unprecedented surge in the expansion of electronic media. At present, there is a network of 85 Private TV Channels and 138 FM

Radios that are licensed to work independently in the country. The constitution of the country under article 19 also ensures that every citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression while the newly incorporated article 19A ensures that every citizen shall have the right to access to information in all matters of public importance.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to conclude by reiterating our support to the Department of Public Information and its endeavours to carry out its mandate effectively and reassure you of our fullest cooperation in this regard.

Thank you.