

Statement by Mr. Johann Aeschlimann, Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations (25 April 2012)

Mr. President,

I would like to congratulate you and assure you and the bureau of our full support.

My delegation would like to thank acting Under-Secretary-General Naher Nasser and the former Under-Secretary General Akasaka for their detailed reporting on the activities of the Department of Information over the past year. We would like to commend the Department for its work which is of increasing importance to the United Nation's success in a rapidly changing world. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks for the achievements of the Department during the tenure of Mr. Akasaka and we wish the best of luck to you, Mr. Nasser, in leading the Department on its way forward.

Mr. President,

During the past year, we have seen how important reliable, fast and accurate information is. In the increasingly deafening cacophony of messages and signals, it is a challenge for both the consumers and the producers of information to convey the essence of an issue. And recent events, particularly in the Arab world, show the impact of new ways of procuring, disseminating and dialoguing on information. A complicating factor in this already very complex situation is the economic duress experienced by large parts of the media in many of our Member States. The "new world information and communication order" envisaged each year in our resolutions comes into being as we speak, but perhaps not entirely in the fashion that we expect or hope it to be.

The information our committee is concerned with is political information, information that empowers citizens to follow and participate in the political conversation and to take part in the political decision-making both at the national and the international level. In Switzerland's view it is important that the committee focus on the essential and the fundamental. This means first and foremost freedom. Political information — as opposed to propaganda or public relations — lives and breathes freedom — the freedom to gather information, the freedom to ask difficult questions, the freedom to publish, the freedom to speak and the freedom to read and watch what free media publish.

The United Nations plays an important role as an information actor, and in particular the Department of Public Information. In situations of uncertainty the United Nations information services often serve as a reliable source for keeping up with events. In this regard, we commend the action of the news division. It is equally important that the citizens of the world know and understand the UN and its action. Outreach activities are essential. And it is highly commendable that the UN stays up to date with the rapid progress of information technologies. The activities of the secretariat to harness the power of the computer, the mobile phone and the Internet are encouraging. The presence of the UN on platforms like YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, are useful to reach certain audiences. In our view, DPI's strategic planning should particularly focus on emerging and innovative approaches to current

challenges such as "Delivering as One" or the UN Peacebuilding Architecture. We expect DPI to be a key supporter of these endeavors.

This does not mean the traditional media should be neglected. We are fully aware that in large parts of the world, it is neither the computer nor the mobile phone that is the main source of information. We would like to particularly underline the continuing importance of radio. Switzerland supports the Swiss-based "Hirondelle" — Foundation which operates in cooperation with the UN highly trusted radio stations in several countries, the largest operation being Radio "Okapi" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, let me draw your attention to the upcoming international Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East which is convened by DPI every year and which Switzerland has the honor to host this year. The Seminar will take place on 12 and 13 June in Geneva. It will give an opportunity to discuss the impact of the Arab uprisings on the situation in the Middle East.

Mr. President,

It is important that the Member States engage in the information efforts of the United Nations in a forward-looking and constructive way. We look forward to a results-oriented negotiation of our resolution and we think the draft provided by G-77 is a good basis.

Thank you.