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**CLOSING REMARKS BY
THE ACTING UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR GLOBAL
COMMUNICATIONS
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE GENERAL DEBATE
OF THE 39TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION**

TUESDAY, 25 APRIL 2017

15.00

Conference Room 2 (CB)

Thank you,
Mr. Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee as you conclude your General debate for this 39th session. We would like to thank all of the delegations for their kind words addressed to the Department of Public Information (DPI) and for the support you have given, and continue to give, to DPI as we work to engage the world in the story of the United Nations. The feedback you provide is highly valued and appreciated.

Yesterday afternoon and this morning, during our informal interactive dialogue, we provided just a few examples of our many communications products and activities. Let me now address some of the questions and observations that you have made in the course of the General debate. While I may not be able to cover each point, we are always available to you for any specific clarifications that you may seek.

As in previous years, a number of delegations have reaffirmed the importance of multilingualism. We heard you loud and clear. This is an issue that is at the core of our communications effort; we strive to incorporate multilingualism into every aspect of our work. To that end, we continue to look for ways to utilize opportunities created by partnerships and new technologies to increase the availability of multilingual content.

Indeed, DPI is deeply committed to the production of content in all six UN official languages and to maintaining maximum adherence to principles of accessibility for persons with disabilities. A recent review within the context of the Secretary-General's report on multilingualism found that DPI currently owns, manages or supports 195 websites under the main United Nations domain name, of which more than 170 are available in the six official languages. With respect to websites of different departments of the Secretariat, DPI continues its governance role, with a key control point being the use of the UN.ORG domain name, which can only be authorized by DPI. We continue to underscore to all departments that any new websites must conform to the multilingualism and accessibility standards.

DPI has worked diligently to increase the amount of multilingual content online. New products include seven new websites for UN Observances, a new website for the Security Council's committee on Resolution 1540 and a new website for DPI's own Media and Accreditation Liaison Unit.

We have also undertaken cost-effective collaborations to make content available in various languages. For example, United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) member Shanghai International Studies University, which is already translating the *UN Chronicle*, will produce a pro bono Chinese translation of the forthcoming edition of *Basic Facts about the United Nations*. We would also like to thank the United Arab Emirates for offering to support the translation of the latest edition of *Basic Facts* into Arabic. We are exploring how to expand the number of agreements with universities on multilingual content.

Multilingualism is mainstreamed into other outreach activities. For example, hundreds of thousands of visitors are welcomed to UN offices in Geneva, Nairobi, New York and Geneva

and tours are offered in all UN official languages and, depending on the duty station, in additional local languages.

When our digital assets are adapted into languages, they are then shared more broadly across the UN system on a content-sharing platform.

The Department's multilingual work – in official and local languages – is hugely increased and amplified by the UN Information Centres, whose contributions in this regard you have recognized in your statements. We are working towards tighter planning and coordination between DPI Headquarters and UNICs of multilingual content.

While we are striving to do more within existing resources, the Secretary-General will in his forthcoming biennium budget proposal for 2018-2019 include additional resources to allow the Department to meet some requests for multilingualism.

Several delegates raised the question of discrepancies between languages in the production of press releases, and reiterated earlier calls for a strategy to address this issue. DPI conducted consultations with Member States and with the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management in this regard, seeking a cost-neutral way to deliver press releases in all six official languages. One option was tested with the Spanish language a few years ago and the result was not satisfactory – either to DPI or to Spanish-speaking Member States with whom we conferred on the results – for reasons to do with timeliness and accuracy. In the absence of a workable solution, DPI presented a proposal to the General Assembly in the last biennium budget discussion, which was rejected by the Fifth Committee, as mentioned. We will present again a proposal to the Member States for consideration for the next biennium budget.

While I would like to note that press releases are not translations or verbatim records, and that they are produced under great pressure to be issued within two hours of the conclusion of a meeting, I would like to assure you that we are working to try to find solutions to the concerns raised by Member States.

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for your recognition and support of our work in, and with, social media to promote a better understanding of the United Nations, particularly as a cost-effective method of reaching large audiences, while respecting the continued importance of traditional means of communication. This is not an either-or proposition. In fact, we view both forms of content as integral to ensuring that all members of the global family are able to hear – and be a part of – the UN, and we will continue to use as many platforms as possible to reach the widest possible audience. In short, we need to be where people go to get their information.

Indeed, we are incorporating traditional media into social media to the benefit of both. Tweets based on the facts contained in the *Yearbook of the United Nations* collection, for example, provide a unique historical perspective on current UN activities and concerns. Thanks to social media referrals, the number of visits to the UN's official website demonstrates steady growth. All DPI language units maintain a social media presence, including platforms such as SoundCloud and Video Clip, designed to increase the number of people around the world that can access audio content via traditional and new media.

One delegate remarked on the need to improve internal management of new media. The Department has already started strengthening its internal oversight over its new media accounts.

Another delegate inquired about the provision of 15-minute radio programmes. Based on the culture of evaluation that Member States have requested, DPI surveyed partner radio stations. They confirmed that 15-minute packages are not considered useful for their programming, and thus we have adjusted our content towards reduced programme lengths.

Distinguished delegates,

The UN message would not have a full global reach without the expertise of our staff in UNICs worldwide. On behalf of our colleagues in the field, I would like to thank you for recognizing

their work in so many of your statements. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the support provided to our Information Centres by you, the Member States – whether through direct financial means or providing them with reduced rent or rent-free premises or various partnership opportunities.

UNICs are at the front line in reaching out across the digital divide, as well as furthering the multilingual agenda to which we are all committed. I would also like to note the work of the teams at the UN Information Services in Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi and their coordination with and support of the many UN as well as non-UN entities based at these UN headquarters, in addition to their efforts in promoting the UN agenda.

During the General debate, one delegate encouraged the Department to increase membership in the United Nations Academic Impact, in particular from developing countries. Since its inception in 2010, UNAI has grown to include some 1,200 institutions in nearly 120 countries, with representation from developing countries expanding rapidly.

Regarding international observances, DPI guarantees that all General Assembly-mandated observance days are represented with a website in the six UN official languages that meets accessibility standards and is mobile-compatible.

In response to a concern raised by another delegate, I would like to explain that the Audio Visual Library is principally tasked with assisting in handling requests for videos. DPI does not have staff capacity to regularly post each speaker for every meeting and to provide a corresponding downloadable link. This service is only made available during the General Assembly for statements made during the General Debate.

With regard to counter-terrorism, DPI covers the issue extensively. On the English version of the UN News website, 62 stories on the subject have been posted since 1 January. UN Television is producing three short films focusing on survivors and victims of terror attacks. DPI has also established a web portal on counter-terrorism that provides a single, coherent view on the various programmes being undertaken by the United Nations in this field.

Distinguished delegates,

We take note of the statement by several delegates earlier today about the dangers of fake news. We look forward to working with members of the Committee on identifying best practices and tools to deal with this new threat. Equally, we take note of the proposal that the Department hold regular meetings or briefings with the press attachés of Permanent Missions, and will take steps to identify the modalities and frequency of such briefings.

One delegate asked about the duration of the Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists Fellowship Programme and whether it could be extended and the number of participants increased. Please know DPI makes every effort to maximize the number of participants and duration of the RAF Programme within existing resources. This year, we are inviting 15 journalists for three weeks coinciding with the opening of the General Assembly. As resources for the Programme are increasingly limited while, at the same time, travel costs and the daily subsistence allowance (DSA) are increasing, we have been unable to expand the Programme as much as we would like. At the same time, however, we have sought to expand the reach of the Programme by sharing briefing materials with journalists online. Last year, 33 journalists from 14 countries participated online.

The United Nations digital library, developed by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, ensures the preservation of the digital content produced by the UN. It offers full, free-of-charge access and support to the existing depository library programme of more than 360 libraries in 135 countries and self-governing territories. In addition, the DHL is preparing training via webinars, research guides and how-to manuals that can be shared with those libraries that need or request them.

Distinguished delegates,

We are heartened that UN Headquarters attracts so many diverse audiences to events held here. The distinguished delegate from Belarus mentioned the exhibit on Chernobyl which will be inaugurated tomorrow. On the same day DPI is helping organize two events here with an educational and academic focus.

At 11:00 a.m. in the ECOSOC Chamber, DPI, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations, the Austrian Cultural Forum, Facing History and Ourselves, and the New York City Department of Education, will hold a multimedia presentation entitled *The Children of Willesden Lane* about the experience of a Jewish child refugee who was able to escape the Nazis on the Kindertransport to the United Kingdom just before the Second World War.

Then, in this Conference Room at 3:00 p.m., we have an event in the Prevention Forum series of our regular seminars entitled *Unlearning Intolerance*. Scholars and media practitioners will look at the subject of intolerance and how to “unlearn it”. Distinguished delegates are welcome at these events.

Mr. Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

I hope I have addressed your questions as fully as possible in the spirit of transparency and collaboration that guides our work. Should there be issues or questions I have not been able to address within the allotted time, all of us in DPI remain at your disposal to continue our dialogue. The Department very much looks forward to continuing its work with you through the Bureau of the Committee, to the outcome of your deliberations over the coming days, and to the guidance that the Committee will provide through its recommendations to the General Assembly.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, members of the Bureau and distinguished delegates.
