



STATEMENT BY MR. RAGHUNATH JHA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 34: QUESTION RELATING TO INFORMATION AT THE FOURTH COMMITTEE OF THE 61ST SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 17, 2006

Mr. Chairman,

The Indian delegation welcomes this opportunity to comment on the topic of "Questions relating to Information". Through his statement yesterday, Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor has set the tone for a lively debate, and I would like to congratulate him for the dynamic leadership that he has provided to what is now a restructured and revitalized Department of Public Information (DPI). I would also like to associate my delegation with the statement made by the distinguished representative of South Africa, as the G-77 Chairman.

Mr Chairman,

The UN stands at the threshold of a new era, with a variety of opportunities and threats on its horizon. The DPI has a pivotal role to play at this sensitive stage, since it is the conduit for the flow of information between the UN, member states, media, civil society and the public at large. We welcome the DPI's four strategic objectives: targeted delivery of public information, enhanced use of the new information and communication technologies, increased partnerships with civil society and integrating a culture of evaluation. The DPI will be measured by its success in meeting its goals within limited resources.

Mr Chairman,

DPI must intensify its efforts to meet the concerns and special needs of the developing countries in the field of information and communications technology. The 'digital divide' remains vast; huge segments of populations in developing countries continue to be deprived of the benefits of the information and IT revolution. Traditional means of communication, including radio and print, retain tremendous relevance for disseminating the UN message in developing countries. In this context, we encourage the use of combination of traditional means such as print and radio, and new information and communications

technologies, such as internet and web-casting by DPI. We have noted Department's efforts to strengthen and expand its partnership with international broadcasters, especially in the developing world. **In this context, we welcome United Nations Radio Website programming including Hindi, Bengali, Urdu.**

The role of United Nations Information Centres [UNICs] in disseminating information about the aims, objectives and activities of the United Nations, especially in developing countries, is critical. Adequate budgetary resources must be reassigned to secure effective functioning of UNICs. We have noted in the latest report of the Secretary-General that DPI is taking measures to integrate the network of UNICs into its overall communications strategies and work plan. We would encourage DPI to consult closely with host countries, other countries served by these Information Centres, as well as the concerned region, in its efforts at further improvisation and innovation. The geographical, linguistic and technological characteristics of the various regions need to be taken into account. Development of websites in local languages must also remain a primary DPI concern as it seeks to provide up-to-date information in the field.

We welcome DPI's effort to develop and refine its global communications strategy in support of United Nations peacekeeping operations. It is encouraging to note that DPI and DPKO brought together Chiefs of Information from 18 UN Peacekeeping and Political Missions along with a large number of Headquarters personnel in April this year for a dialogue on the way public information is conducted in the field and how it is supported at Headquarters. The two Departments, particularly need to work together and highlight success stories of peacekeeping and the role of peacekeepers in their areas of operation. The local challenges facing the peacekeeping operations in number of its missions like UNIFIL, UNMEE, UNMIS, etc. must not be under-estimated. By appropriate projection, the DPI could go a long way towards creating goodwill and a better image for the United Nations and its peacekeepers. We support involving DPI right from the initial stages of PKO's through interdepartmental consultations and coordination, particularly with DPKO.

Mr Chairman,

Some of the other important issues contained in the report of the Secretary-General pertain to the UN Website; outreach activities; academic initiatives and culture of evaluation. We would like to congratulate the DPI for the impressive strides made in development of the UN Website, an important resource-base for the UN family as well as for the wider public. In particular, we compliment recent improvements in its website that ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. We also note with interest the UN Chronicle's efforts to develop co-publishing partnerships and collaborative educational activities as well

as the publication of the 58th Volume of Annual Yearbook of the United Nations, an authoritative reference book on United Nations.

We laud the efforts by DPI to reach out to specialized target audiences such as Non-Governmental Organisations, research institutions, libraries and academic communities. We welcome the Global Teaching and Learning project and accompanying CyberSchoolBus website, which has recorded hundred per cent increase from last year. We continue to favour DPI efforts to strengthen its focal point role for interaction with civil society.

We have noted with interest the continuing promotion and refinement of a culture of evaluation and performance and DPI becoming the first UN Department to institute an Annual Programme Impact Review, as a self-evaluation tool. Training of staff to constantly review the impact of their work is a natural follow-up to this emphasis on evaluation. It is good that DPI is constantly exploring new ideas in this regard.

In closing, Mr Chairman, we fully agree with the Secretary-General that DPI's success will always be measured by how convincingly it tells the United Nations story and how well it connects with its constituents: member states, media, civil society and the public. I would like to assure our support to the DPI team in tackling the formidable task before it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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