



# *Malaysia*

*Permanent Mission to the United Nations*

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**STATEMENT BY**

**THE HONOURABLE NUR JAZLAN MOHAMED  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
REPRESENTATIVE OF MALAYSIA**

**ON**

**AGENDA ITEM 78: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION**

**AT**

**THE FOURTH COMMITTEE OF THE 59<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, NEW YORK**

**ON**

**THURSDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2004**

*(Please check against delivery)*

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information for his comprehensive and enlightening introductory statement on the work carried out by the Department of Public Information (DPI). I would like to also express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on "Questions Relating to Information" as contained in document A/59/221.

2. My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by the distinguished Permanent Representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and also the statement made by the distinguished representative of Thailand on behalf of the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Mr. Chairman,

3. My delegation maintains the view that the United Nations has an important role to play with regard to Questions Relating to Information. We follow with keen interest the ongoing reform of the Department of Public Information (DPI) launched by the Secretary-General in 2002 to enhance the performance and effectiveness of the Department. We are pleased with the progress being made on the continuing reorientation of the DPI as laid out in the report of the Secretary-General. We hope that the new operating model, new organizational structure as well as the new mission statement would further enhance the capabilities and effectiveness of the Department to inform the world at large of the diverse functions of the United Nations.

4. Given that the new mission of the Department is "to promote global awareness and enhanced understanding of the diverse functions of the United Nations", it would be only proper and meaningful, therefore, for the DPI to focus its campaign on issues that are relevant to the public and related to the priorities of the Organization, such as issues that are addressed in UN Millennium declaration, namely poverty eradication, education and capacity building, protracted conflicts, the rampant spread of HIV/AIDS and other major diseases, and sustainable development. The activities being carried out and the successes achieved in these areas must be highlighted continuously. At a time when questions have been raised about the effectiveness of the United Nations, it is important that the Organization's activities relating to information be made more focused so as to restore public confidence in and support for the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

5. It is encouraging to note that despite facing considerable financial and personnel constraints, the DPI has continuously strived to maximize its efforts by making better use of new information and communication technologies. We are glad that the Internet is now widely used as an important medium for disseminating timely and comprehensive information. Although mindful of the fact that millions of people around the world still cannot share the benefits of the rapid growth of information technology, such as the access to the Internet, we think that the United Nations has made a good start to encourage the development of information societies around the world. Too many people around the world still lack basic

needs such as food, water, decent shelter, education and health care. For them the Internet is still a distant dream. There remains this ever widening gap in the information and communication technologies between the developed and developing countries. Therefore, there is the urgent need to genuinely cooperate to bridge this widening digital divide. We believe that at the international level, measures should and could be taken to develop partnerships between developed and developing countries in research, technology transfer, the manufacturing and marketing of ICT products and services so as to promote capacity building and remove the digital divide. We believe that the United Nations has an important role in this regard.

6. This digital divide is of great concern for a developing country like Malaysia. The primary issue in Malaysia is service outreach to the less privileged areas. To overcome the problem, Malaysia has implemented among others, the "Rural Internet Programme" aimed at providing computer and Internet infrastructure, services and opportunities to the rural areas. As a start, Rural Internet Centers (RIC) and the Rural Portal have been established under this programme. Another project being successfully carried out in Malaysia is the Mobile Internet Unit, whereby a fleet of coaches with Internet enabled computers travel the country to reach and bring internet access to the less privileged areas. Access to the Internet is also provided to schools through a nationwide schools' ICT development programme.

Mr. Chairman,

7. My delegation fully appreciates the UN's role in campaigning for international support on economic and social issues for the most vulnerable countries. In this regard, the UN's dissemination of the reports and discussions on the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council held in June 2004, especially in highlighting the situation of the least developed countries, is highly commendable. DPI's role in giving wide coverage on the outcome of the Almaty Ministerial Conference held in August 2003, has also helped to highlight the challenges and plight faced by landlocked developing countries. Malaysia is proud to have contributed to the wide range of promotional activities undertaken by DPI in promoting the International Year of Freshwater 2003. Malaysia's contribution specifically was to provide media coverage through The Star newspaper on the progress of achieving the water target of the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, Malaysia would continue to support the activities of the DPI.

Mr. Chairman,

8. It is encouraging to acknowledge that a major focus of the DPI's news-gathering and reporting activities continue to be on the situation in Africa given the many problems faced by the African countries and the need to support African efforts, in particular the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We welcome the range of activities undertaken by the DPI to enhance the UN activities in support of the sustainable development of Africa. However, we believe that a long-term action-oriented strategy is required to ensure the UN's involvement on a continuous basis together with rest of the international community in the joint effort to assist Africa resolve many of the problems faced by the governments and people there.

Mr. Chairman,

9. My delegation is pleased that the question of Palestine continues to remain a focus for the United Nations and DPI. We congratulate DPI for the success of the twelfth International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East held in Beijing on 16 and 17 June 2004, with the collaboration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. The tragic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories needs to be told to the public and the international community must work harder to put on track the peace process and end the prolonged suffering of the Palestinian people. We think that the DPI can and should continue to play crucial role as the voice of the UN particularly in highlighting issues relating to the Question of Palestine. Malaysia commends DPI's efforts in providing training programmes for the Palestinian media practitioners. This could assist in improving their capacity to throw light on the plights of the Palestinians to the world from their own perspective and not through biased reporting by certain media circles

10. With regard to the restructuring of the United Nations information centers, my delegation fully subscribes to the views expressed by the Group of 77 and China. Meanwhile, we are encouraged by the joint cooperation between the DPI and UNDP in the rationalization process of the network of United Nations Information Centers.

Mr. Chairman,

11. My delegation fully appreciates DPI's endeavour to use multilingualism in all communication activities, especially in the website. Given the world's linguistic diversity, a wider outreach of DPI's new communication strategies can only be realized through a balanced and equitable use of the six official languages of the United Nations. We welcome DPI's partnership with the academic community worldwide in translating information material into other languages to further increase the availability of material other than in English on the web.

Mr. Chairman,

12. In conclusion, we are confident the DPI will continue to play a major role in bringing the United Nations closer to the public. Malaysia fully supports the new direction the Department has taken in order to become a more effective vehicle of communication between the Organization and the peoples of the World.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.