

Statement by H.E. Mrs. Roberta Lajous, Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico, on behalf of the 20 Spanish-speaking countries of the Organization (3 May 2001)

Mr. President,

It is an honor for the Delegation of Mexico, to speak in this meeting of the Committee of Information on behalf of Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Spain, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Uruguay and Venezuela, all Spanish speaking members of the United Nations, in order to express our deep concern for the increasing gap that exists in the information that our Organization makes available in Spanish and other official languages, with respect to the one distributed in English. Furthermore, it is very troubling to realize that this breach, as the Secretary-General himself points out in his report about this matter, regardless of all the efforts that have been made, will continue to grow.

As we all know, Spanish, like other official languages, has been recognized as an official and working language of this Organization, according to articles 51, 41, and 31 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly, of the Security Council and of the Economic and Social Council, respectively. Furthermore, aside from being one of the UN six official languages, Spanish is an international language spoken all over the world by over 400 million people, a figure that, according to demographic predictions, will rise to 550 million by the year 2050. In addition, it is a language that already counts with 21 million users on Internet.

Nevertheless, its present treatment in the realm of public information at the United Nations not only disregards the current rules of procedure of our Organization, but it also seems to underestimate the extraordinary impact that Spanish has both, g/zdct BMC 1 0.2 g10.02 -0 0 10.02 0 363.66 Tm/z

means of information, has contributed to extend the reach of the message of our Organization around the world. However, we consider that the tendency to prioritize the use of a single language limits and, what is even more serious, diminishes the enormous potential that this innovative cybernetic technology can have in creating bridges between our Organization and the civil society around the world, allowing the UN global message to attain a truly local voice and meaning.

As it has become noticeable in recent meetings regarding the Internet, organized this year in the United Nations by the Economic and Social Council, "only a tenth of the world population speaks English, but at present 80% of the contents in the Web are in this language". For this reason, it is troubling to find out similar, and sometimes even larger figures, in the use of

a more equitable distribution of its information; one that truly reflects the diversity of the world that it is here represented.

Mr. President,

We concur with the Secretary-General when he states in his report that the improvement, maintenance and accomplishment of the multilingual site in the United Nations web is a priority of the Department of Public Information. Nevertheless, we regret that the progress in this respect has been slower than anticipated, due to the lack of practical knowledge of and resources available within the Organization for those languages that are no6.1 (age).1 (s)2 (0.5 (bat).6 (05 (bat).t BM

8. We express our deep appreciation to the Secretary General for his initiative of uploading materials related to the United Nations meetings in the United Nations web site in all official languages. In this regard, we highlight the importance of applying the same criteria to other public information documents, including the United Nations Treaty Series;

Mr. President:

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that the 20 Spanish-speaking countries members of the United Nations, believe that multilingualism is not only a question of principle but also an indispensable tool in the dissemination of the image and activities of the United Nations, an Organization which speaks and communicates its message in all its official languages.

Thank you.