Statement by H.E. Ms. M. Patricia Durrant, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations (23 April 2002)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the fourteen member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), namely Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Bahamas, Dominica, Haiti, Grenada, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Jamaica.

CARICOM is pleased to see you and your Bureau presiding once again over the work of this Committee. We look forward to its successful deliberations under your keen and skilful guidance.

We also wish to commend the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information (DPI), Mr. Shashi Tharoor, for the timely submission of the reports before the Committee. The DPI is to be congratulated for the comprehensive quality of its reports, which will be of invaluable assistance to the Committee in fulfilling its mandate. CARICOM is also very appreciative of the extensive introduction to the reports provided by Mr. Tharoor.

We fully associate ourselves with the statement made earlier by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.   We would wish, however, to elaborate on some issues, which are of particular concern to our region.

Mr. Chairman,

Information is indisputably an important tool, which assists the processes of education, learning and communication and can be treated as a benchmark in a country's progress towards development. It is noted that the 'digital divide' which was highlighted at the 2000 Millennium Summit is not getting much smaller. It is in this context that   CARICOM notes with appreciation the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General in seeking to address this matter through the establishment of bodies such as the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Health InterNetwork and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force. CARICOM also looks forward to the holding of the two-day meeting in June of this year on information technology, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/258, when issues relating to the bridging of the 'digital divide' will be discussed.

Initiatives such as those undertaken by UNESCO in promoting access to information and communication technologies at the community level are to be commended and programmes such as SIDSNET — the sustainable network programme developed by the UNDP which links small island states around the world — are also extremely useful in the promotion and exchange of information. These information and communication systems should have coordinated linkages within the information 'family' of the United Nations.

CARICOM has also taken note of the new accent in the Department's report on the need for strengthened and improved coordination between the many other departments which have an

CARICOM delegations are also supportive of the Department's intention to focus on major issues identified by the United Nations Secretary-General, namely poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, terrorism and the needs of the African continent.   In this regard, CARICOM believes that there should be a clear relationship between the United Nations Secretary-General's Road Map for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the focus on the activities of the DPI.

The issue of peacekeeping and the improvement of the public information capacity of peacekeeping and other field missions also needs to be kept constantly in view.

Information which is provided through media, such as radio, is essential to promoting awareness and understanding of Peace Accords and of the United Nations Mandate.

Radio

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM delegations have noted the express intent of the Department to evaluate its performance on the basis of results-based budgeting.   While we can support the need for an evaluation process based on such criteria we would urge that any evaluation take into account the impact that the work of the Department is having on various regions.   In other words, evaluations should not be solely based on the "numbers crunch" but on the information, communication and educational impact that the Department's activities are having on Member States, in particular those in developing countries.

We note that the Department has indicated the need for a systematic evaluation of the live radio project. The report produced by the DPI highlights the fact that the current pilot radio programmes reach a listenership of some 180 million persons around the globe.   Again we would urge that an assessment of the impact of these programmes be based not only in terms of the numbers of active listeners, but on the effect that these programmes have on certain regions in providing information on the United sed he 6.6 (t)31.5 (s)-2 (t)7D.02 -0 0 1(be 2 g10.0T/P (on6)6.

complement these. We therefore see as imperative that the requisite resources, including personnel, be made available to the Caribbean Radio Unit within the DPI to facilitate this process.

CARICOM also calls for the reinstatement of the Caribbean Magazine Programme, which was a valuable resource tool for a wide cross section of Caribbean society, in particular, the academic community. We also continue to call on the DPI to fulfill its obligations under resolution 38/82B of 15 December 1983 to introduce radio programming in Creole for Haiti.

Publications

Mr. Chairman,

The DPI has indicated its intention to consolidate the production of DPI publications within the Department's organizational structure.   We note that this will be taken in the context of the wider review to be undertaken of the United Nation's publication and information materials, mandated under General Assembly resolution 56/253.

CARICOM concurs with the position that a review of the publications to be issued by the Secretariat should be conducted.   This review should also be based on the continuing benefit and relevance of these publications to the needs and mandates of the Organisation, which