

Statement by H.E. Mr. Stafford Neil, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (28 April 2004)

I have the honour to speak this afternoon on behalf of members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) in particular those countries which are members of the Committee on Information, namely Belize, Guyana, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, Jamaica.

Allow me to join with previous speakers in commending you on your leadership of the Committee on Information. CARICOM delegations are confident that under your able guidance, the work of this twenty-sixth session of the Committee will result in a positive

based on a client-oriented focus, greater system-wide coordination and the culture of evaluation offer much promise for the DPI to be more responsive to the information needs of the member states of the United Nations. In a situation where the public image of the United Nations has recently suffered, the establishment of a common communications framework is supported by CARICOM as it is important for the organization to provide a strong and consistent message on its work and activities. It is useful to note that this system-wide coordination extends well beyond UN Headquarters and involves membership of heads of United Nations information centres in the United Nations country teams in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. It is to be hoped that as part of this coordination, the heads of the United Nations Information Centres in the developed countries are also part of this exercise.

The new culture of evaluation which is being encouraged in the DPI is supported by CARICOM. It is of some interest that the performance indicators are based on the response of the target audiences. While this may be a useful tool to assess the impact and reach of the work of the Department, CARICOM would nonetheless caution against a reliance on these responses as a basis for any reduction in the services offered by the Department. Other criteria rather than numerical ones may need to be employed, including a measurement of the impact of the UN information product on the target audiences. Additionally, any evaluation should take into consideration that lack of response may be due to other factors rather than a lack of interest. We urge the Secretariat to consider this when evaluating the UN Radio programmes, particularly as this relates to coverage to the Dutch speaking countries in the Caribbean.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM affirms its support for the work of the DPI to be guided by the strategic priorities identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals and highlights the importance of effective communications strategies to promote the work of the United Nations in these areas. The Department has achieved useful work over the previous year in promoting various issues such as the World Summit on Information Society, the combating of HIV/AIDS and the needs of the African continent. We again urge that a communications strategy be developed for the international meeting on Small Island Developing States to be held in Mauritius in August 2004. CARICOM welcomes any additional information from DPI on the communication strategy adopted by the United Nations Communications Group on this event.

United Nations Information Centres (UNICs)

Access to accurate and impartial information provides an impetus to political and socio-economic development. This is no less so for the majority of the members of the United Nations which face a possible reduction in the effective delivery of information due to budgetary considerations including the possible closure of many United Nations Information Centres.

CARICOM is sensitive to the fact that financial considerations have prompted proposals regarding the rationalization of United Nations Information Centres around regional hubs. CARICOM has noted that the first phase of the regionalization of United Nations Information Centres (UNICS) has now been completed following the establishment of the Regional United Nations Centre (RUNIC) in Brussels as of January 2004 and that the Department is currently examining the extension of this concept to other regions. We would however encourage the Department to consider any further proposals for regionalization in a careful manner, sensitive to the geographical, cultural, linguistic and other defining characteristics of the region concerned and in close consultation with all countries which may be affected by the implementation of the proposals contained in the report of the Secretary General on the Rationalization of the network of United Nations Information Centres. CARICOM is pleased to note that the Secretariat is cognizant that there cannot be a "one size fits all" approach and

would urge that the work of the UNICS in various countries be evaluated in terms of an assessment of the impact and presence of the UNIC in furthering the work and objectives of the United Nations. Additionally, it may be useful to evaluate the operations of the RUNIC in Brussels over a longer time period before extending the concept to other regions within the stipulated time frame.

In noting the contents of the report placed before the Committee in A/AC.198/2004/3, CARICOM reaffirms the importance of the United Nations Information Centre in Port of Spain, Trinidad which currently serves and all the English-speaking countries in the Caribbean and Suriname in South America. CARICOM has, in the past, called for the establishment of an information component in the UNDP1 (n)0.5 (c)4 3.6(c)-2 (a)1.4 (l)1.5 (ed r)4.7 (e)6l ()4.7 ((l)1.5 (v9C 1 g (i)1.5ta.

Libraries

CARICOM delegations' continue to be pleased with the services offered by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and recognize the efforts of this institution to become a virtual library while not neglecting the importance of printed materials. The level of outreach offered by the library to civil society should also be commended.

CARICOM has taken note of the new mission statement of the Library. We also wish to acknowledge the role played by of the Library in providing training services not only for the staff of Permanent Missions but also for the depository librarians in developing countries. Such training should be continued. The importance of the Library in providing support to the field libraries has also been invaluable.

The work of the Library during the course of the past year in expanding its outreach to educational institutions including through the provision of training opportunities at the United Nations headquarters has been noted with interest by CARICOM. CARICOM delegations would wish to receive additional information as to ways in which students from developing countries could benefit from similar training opportunities.

CARICOM is supportive of the efforts to better publicise the work and decisions of the General Assembly as this is the organ which is more representative of the membership of the organisation. While we commend the work undertaken by the DPI in this regard, we are of the

