

Closing Remarks by Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information (29 April 2004)

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

I am very happy to respond to what has certainly been a rich and illuminating debate, and I would like to express my appreciation to all the delegations who have spoken over the last three days on the work of the Department. Through your statements in the general debate, you have provided us with constructive and perceptive comments and suggestions. My colleagues and I have listened with great interest to your statements, and I would now like to offer some clarification and comments on the main issues and the specific questions you have raised.

Having inflicted such a comprehensive opening statement on you on Monday, I will try to be as brief as possible, but given the number of issues and questions raised, I will not be as brief as I would have wished. I will therefore group the issues that have been raised and address them accordingly, and in the interest of time, I will not specify which delegations raised which questions.

organizational structure. Many of you have also commended our new client-oriented approach and our efforts to institute a culture of evaluation in our work, while encouraging us to continue to refine this ongoing process of reform and a system of performance management.

In this regard, one delegate stressed the importance of coupling data collection with data analysis and to ensure that the two are not to the detriment of the day-to-day work of programme managers. I agree wholeheartedly. The aim of our annual programme impact review is to create a systematic "feedback loop" between ongoing data collection and programme planning, and the analysis of the data collected is an essential step in linking the Department's products and activities more precisely to the needs of target audiences.

We know there is much work still to be done, but your endorsement and encouraging words of support will inspire us to continue our efforts in this regard.

I would be failing in my duty, however, if I did not address the concerns expressed yesterday that DPI too often gives voice to the interest of certain groups of States. I understand the comment, but wish to point out that DPI's mandates come from the General Assembly - and

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In addition to the information activities on peacekeeping that I described in my statement on Monday, DPI's Peace and Se

2005. I should like to assure the Committee that we in DPI are already discussing the communications strategy with our colleagues at ITU, the lead agency for that Summit. We are fully committed to raising the profile of the Tunis phase, as the preparatory process develops, to help generate a positive outcome.

One delegation pointed to what he viewed as an "imbalance" in the granting of interviews by the Secretary-General to media in developed countries versus developing countries. We acknowledge that there is an imbalance, and this is something we are also concerned about. However, interviews with "developed" media networks often reach the developing world, in fact, they almost invariably do, given the nature of the global media, rather than vice-versa. In addition, the Secretary-General always gives interviews to the local media when he visits specific countries, including of course, those in the developing world. However, we will encourage him to do more in this respect.

To the question raised by one delegate about the amount of office space allocated to the

system colleagues on an appropriate information strategy for Iraq, once the role of the United Nations in that country has been clearly redefined.

I want to assure the delegates who have urged DPI to continue promoting the dialogue among civilizations, that my department will remain proactively involved in this area. Only last week, I addressed the Asia Media Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on this subject among others. DPI is also supporting the Goethe Institute in Germany and the Barcelona Forum in Spain to promote dialogue among civilizations by reaching out to civil society, NGOs and educational institutions. UNICs, including UNIC Moscow and UNIC Teheran, are especially active in this regard. I am convinced that in a world where walls, sometimes invisible ones, divide peoples and cultures, effective public information can greatly contribute towards

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We would fail in our mission if we were seen as simply lecturing to or imparting information to our partners in that sector-NGOs, educational institutions and other interest groups-without, at the same time, seizing upon their immense reservoir of skills, knowledge and experience to offer ideas that can help resolve some of the issues with which we are collectively faced.

We are heartened by the positive reaction and expressions of support on the part of several delegations with respect to the Steering Committee on the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries. In answer to queries raised by a few delegations, I would wish to remind the members of this Committee that the Steering Committee has barely been in operation for one year now. Nevertheless, a number of outputs have been produced within the specific time-frames established by the Steering Committee and the respective sub-committees, including the initial version of a common Web page, which is expected to be finalized at the next meeting of the Steering Committee later this spring.

One delegate asked about indicators of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library's involvement in the Steering Committee. As already reported, DHL is very active, participating in all seven sub-committees and chairing three of them. Furthermore, greater collaboration among United Nations libraries has been added to the Library's goals in the budget for 2004-2005 and strategic framework for 2006-2007. One of the indicators of achievement is precisely "the number of joint and/or coordinated projects by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library and other United Nations libraries".

I should also like to refer to the indicators for the Library's results-based budgeting and Annual Programme Impact Review. In fact, for those reviews, the measure of DHL's achievement was user satisfaction with a broad range of Library products and services, including the books and serials acquired for users, as well as the concrete outputs of cataloguing and indexing.

In response to a question, there are six depository libraries in Pakistan, in five different cities. DHL has been fortunate in obtaining interns from library schools - as well as visits from library groups, some from developing countries. This includes, last summer, an intern from Trinidad and Tobago. DHL would welcome more such interns and students, but unfortunately we do not have the resources to defray their living expenses.

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you that a new Head Librarian is expected to join the Dag Hammarskjöld Library on 1 June. She is a senior colleague with wide experience, currently serving as the Head Librarian of ILO, and who I am confident will be an asset to the Library and to the Department. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation to those delegations who paid tribute to our outgoing Head Librarian, who is retiring from the Organization this month.

With regard to DPI publications in Russian, I would like to note that UN in Brief has continued to be available in Russian in print, as well as on the web. As for Basic Facts, we have only published this substantial publication in English, French and Spanish. UNIC Moscow has arranged Russian editions in the past, and we will discuss this with them for the new edition

now being completed, possibly through co-

the Vice Minister who graciously called on me yesterday, be dependent on the resources for this purpose being released by our regionalization efforts elsewhere. So you see, all of this is tied together.

One delegate noted that only 143 of 191 United Nations Member States were serviced by the current network of information centres and wondered why certain Member States were

