

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to address the Committee on Information as it begins its twenty-sixth session

destruction. The "soft threats", so called, such as extreme poverty and hunger, endemic or infectious disease, or environmental degradation that afflict millions of people, rarely make the headlines. Though the risk of being attacked by terrorists or with weapons of mass destruction, or even of falling prey to genocide, are real enough for all, the dangers of extreme poverty, hunger and disease are ever-present in the lives of millions of people in poor countries. These "problems without passports" — both "hard" and "soft" threats — are challenges that no one country, however powerful, can confront and overcome all alone. The only way to tackle them is together, through common endeavours in pursuit of common goals, ideally using the mechanisms of the United Nations.

have to address all issues, hard and soft, critical and controversial, today and every day. We have no choice but to respond to the insistent demands of the news stories of the day - normally in the world's "hot spots", which today means focusing on Iraq and its future, and the allegations of wrongdoing in the management of the oil-for-

As a result of my obligation to touch on all of these, however briefly, I regret that my statement this morning will do little to enhance my reputation for brevity. But I hope, Mr.

As we informed the Committee members last year, DPI has begun to work with the Office of Internal Oversight Services on a three-year project to institute an internal mechanism for performance management, which of course is in line with the Secretary-General's reform

departments and the strengthened efforts to bring the members of the UN system within a common communications framework. DPI now works with 24 client departments and is developing a communications strategy for each priority established in cooperation with them. The entire UN system has now been integrated within the United Nations Communications Group which, through its weekly meetings and working groups, is able to speak with one voice on UN priority issues. Let me give you some recent examples.

The World Summit on the Information Society, the first phase of which took place in Geneva in December 2003, posed special challenges for public information staffers. The Department worked closely with the International Telecommunications Union and played a vital strategic role in shaping the communications agenda and, with it, the political agenda of the Summit. In our messages we stressed the principle of press freedom and in our outreach aimed to generate coverage by more mainstream media rather than just technology publications and outlets. We drew on long-standing political and media contacts to broaden the outreach of our partner agencies and, by setting up high-impact interviews and placing op-eds by senior officials in the lead-up to the Summit, helped to raise its profile. As a result, media coverage was extensive and considering some of the problems faced by the first phase of the Summit, largely positive. We now look forward to contributing to the second phase to be held next year in Tunis.


For the 2003 World AIDS Day, DPI coordinated a system-wide two-week "media blitz" — a new model for short-term, concentrated campaigns by which staff placed op-eds and organized interviews for a number of senior UN officials, using them as spokespersons to expand o

- And we are using an e-mail alert system for the news, webcasts and photos, to place our products directly into the hands of editors, NGOs, academics and government officials, who will use them to reach out to people in their respective communities. We have also extended the reach of the web to Radio, using FTP (File Transfer Protocol) to make high-quality digital audio files of our radio programmes available to radio stations. Our Sales and Marketing Section is now

share resources, minimize duplication of effort and develop common products, common services and common policies. The Steering Committee has so far held four meetings, mainly by videoconference, bringing together all member libraries.

As part of this ongoing collaboration, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library provided consultancy

closed — not without a great deal of difficulty and pain — on 31 December 2003. This modern and fully-resourced centre, when fully functional — and I stress it is still in temporary premises without a full complement of staff — this RUSIC will enable the Organization to implement a more robust, coherent and coordinated public information outreach programme in the region. We intend to evaluate this operation and share the findings with you, after a reasonable period of time has passed.


high-cost developed countries — namely Sydney, Tokyo and Washington, D.C. You will no doubt be heartened to learn that the Department has negotiated an agreement with the Government of Australia — and I do want to thank the Government of Australia for its generosity — as a result of which the Sydney Centre is expected to move to ~~rento1ioeooveusthe~~

particularly for travel and communications. I therefore request this Committee to urge the General Assembly to support DPI's reform efforts by providing our field offices, especially the regional hubs, with adequate operational resources, rather than reducing them. I do believe that regionalization is the way forward for the reasons that I have explained. But I also believe that if regionalization does not show Member States that we can effectively redirect administrative resources for information purposes, but instead we simply save the administrative resources and show no improvement in our information work, then we will not be able to generate the understanding and the political support so necessary in this Committee, and beyond, for the effective reform changes we are advocating.

Our objective, as proposed in the Secretary-General's report, aims to strengthen and improve access to information on the United Nations by people around the world, including of course,

