

**Closing Remarks by Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for
Communications and Public Information, at the Conclusion of the General
Debate at the 29th session of the Committee on Information (2 May 2007)**

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for giving me the floor to address the Committee, as you conclude your general debate for this 29th session. Please allow me to begin by thanking all the delegations for their kind words addressed to me, to my predecessor, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, and to the Department of Public Information

Several delegates have suggested that UNICs should be provided increased resources, both in terms of funding and posts. Indeed, the financial constraints facing the Department limit our ability to strengthen the work of existing Centres, as was mentioned by the representative of Nepal, or extend coverage to countries not currently included within the scope of our field offices — a concern cited by the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Regarding the establishment of an "enhanced information component in the UNDP office in Kingston", suggested by the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, the Department is simply unable at this stage to provide the staff for such an office. However we will be very happy to work creatively with the Government of Jamaica to see if we can find a solution to this.

In response to a request from the Representative from Yemen to appoint a Director of the Centre in Sana'a, allow me to assure you that the Department is currently working to reinstate this post.

Concerning the establishment of an Information Centre in Luanda — a request reiterated by the distinguished delegate from Angola and his colleague from Cape Verde — I must emphasize that the Department recognizes the importance of serving the needs of the five lusophone developing countries in Africa. The financial situation facing the Department, where UNICs are concerned, has not improved in many years and operating within our existing resources the funds and posts are simply not available to establish and maintain such an office. We will however, continue to be guided by the Committee on Information on this matter.

Several delegations, including Germany, Switzerland and the United States, have stressed the importance of evaluating the performance of UN Information Centres, a matter that I shall personally pursue. In this connection, I should note that the Department is, in fact, planning to conduct a survey later this year to assess the role of UNICs within UN Country Teams and to gauge how our UN-system partners view the activities they undertake and the services they provide.

Of course, the contributions from host governments to the work of UNICs remain vitally important. I would like to express our special appreciation to those host governments that provide voluntary contributions to support our work.

Monsieur le Président,

Je prends note des commentaires faits par de nombreuses délégations, et comprend aujourd'hui Sénégal, Tanzanie, Égypte, Union du Comores et Maroc concernant les efforts du Département en vue d'améliorer le multilinguisme sur le site Web, ainsi que de l'importance que vous attachez au Centre des nouvelles et à la Radio de l'ONU, en particulier. Je voudrais vous assurer que nous sommes engagés à améliorer davantage encore nos efforts en faveur de la parité entre toutes les langues officielles sur le Web, et que nous sommes tout aussi engagés à maintenir la qualité de production et de diffusion du Centre des nouvelles et de la Radio. Grâce à ces médias — et grâce également à la vidéo, bien sûr —, nous continuerons à relater l'information des Nations Unies non seulement objectivement, de façon précise et

équilibrée, mais aussi de manière concrète et humaine, montrant simplement ainsi comment l'Organisation rend service aux gens ordinaires dans leur vie de tous les jours.

De délégations ont souligné la nécessité d'utiliser les médias traditionnels afin de délivrer les

One of our chief goals in this endeavour, as the representative of Croatia and the representative of Bangladesh suggested, is to raise awareness of the significant contribution to global peace and security made by UN peacekeepers. The communications strategy implemented by DPI at Headquarters and with the peace operations has resulted in increased coverage of peacekeeping in troop-contributing countries.

Most recently, we have encouraged peacekeeping missions to help us encourage TCC media to run feature stories on individual peacekeepers, in light of the upcoming International Day of UN Peacekeepers on 29 May. DPI will help disseminate these stories globally and will also illustrate some of these individuals in a DPI-DPKO exhibition to be held at UN Headquarters. We are looking at ways to expand these efforts, by focusing on countries that are new to peacekeeping, and by targeting major troop contributors with the help of the UN Information

languages. Also, UNIC Nairobi produces daily radio programmes in Swahili, which reaches 9 million listeners.

As regards the point made by the distinguished delegate of Egypt, information is posted on the UN website as quickly as possible. Public information materials are sometimes not available to us in all official languages simultaneously. We have brought this matter to the attention of the content-producing offices and the office managing ODS.

In the response to the point raised by the delegate of Libya on the guided tours offered by DPI, I would like to point out that our guides do make remarks about the question of Palestine, particularly during the week in which the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people falls. The guides are briefed on a regular basis about developments related to the question of Palestine, and respond to any questions on this issue.

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Among our other existing partnerships, we have one with a major university through which we have already arranged several video-conferences with global sites, an exhibition, and a project to promote UN programmes on campus radio stations.

A number of delegations have referred to DPI's role in promoting dialogue and understanding. Our "Unlearning Intolerance" seminar series was instituted less than three years ago, but has already left its imprint in the civil society and academic worlds, and was the focus of a recent op-ed piece in a leading daily in Bahrain. The most recent seminar, on "Cartooning for Peace" has been followed by events on the role and responsibilities of political cartoonists, in Geneva, Brussels and Moscow.

In the context of next week's thematic General Assembly debate on "Civilisations and the Challenge for Peace", DPI has helped set the stage by cooperating in the creation of a globally televised discussion on inter-faith dialogue which brought together various experts from around the world and participation at UN Headquarters.

With respect to the points made by the distinguished delegate of Israel on our Holocaust programmes, DPI intends to continue the programme on the Holocaust and the UN as mandated by the General Assembly to the best of our abilities, and within the limits of our financial resources,

Distinguished delegates,

Many of you have called for the Department to be given the resources it needs in order to more effectively fulfil its mandates. Your statements of support are an indication of the value that the Committee accords to the work that we do, and we are appreciative of your comments.

At the interactive session on Monday, we began with a video presenting the ways that DPI tells the UN story. Over the past few days, many delegations, among them Croatia, Thailand and Romania, have reinforced the importance of ensuring the UN story is told through the stories of real people on the ground and the impact the UN has on their lives on the ground. We agree completely with this assessment, and whether it is in an exhibit, a radio programme, a documentary or a feature on the web that we are producing, we strive to put a human face to the work of the Organization and to show how it is working for ordinary people everywhere in the world.

Even though the formal debate has now come to a close, our dialogue with the members of this Committee, through its Bureau, shall continue. I look forward to the outcome of your deliberations over the coming days and to the strategic direction and guidance that the Committee will provide through its recommendations to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

Thank you.