



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY H.E. MR. HORACIO SEVILLA BORJA, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ECUADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (New York, 24 April 2017)

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, I would like to thank H.E. Mr. Kaha Imnadze, Permanent Representative of Georgia and Chair of the Committee on Information for the period 2015-2017, for his commendable efforts during his tenure, and congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, Ambassador Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria, for your election for the next biennium and we trust that you and the other members of the Bureau will steer the Committee towards another successful session in the fulfillment of its task to provide guidance and direction to the Department of Public Information.

We express our appreciation to Mr. Maher Nasser, Acting Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications and Public Information, for his comprehensive presentation on the activities of the Department of Public Information. We also commend the Department for its continued efforts in informing the global public of the works of the United Nations in a manner that is informative, engaging, and accessible. The importance of the Department's work cannot be stressed enough, amid increasing calls for the United Nations to better communicate to and connect with the global public, in order to be better understood and remain relevant.

Mr. Chair,

In 2016 we celebrated the first anniversary of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the entry into force of the Paris Agreement and the convening in Quito of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development that adopted the New Urban Agenda. Let me express the appreciation of the Group for the outreach efforts and communication campaigns, through various media platforms, of these issues and others related to the question of sustainable development, a subject dear to the G77. In this regard, we would like to commend the work done by the Department of Public Information during the aforementioned Habitat III meeting in Quito in October 2016, and the twenty-second session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Marrakech in November 2016.

We encourage the Department to continue to promote through its public campaigns key decisions and agreements reached by the international community, including on sustainable development, decolonization, the New Urban Agenda, dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace, the initiative on a world against violence and violent extremism, peacekeeping, disarmament, poverty eradication and climate change.

Mr. Chair,

The General Assembly resolution 69/324 recognizes that multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding. The Group fully supports its integration into all activities of the United Nations. While we recognize that there has been progress in this issue, the Group continues to be concerned at the disparity in the use of all official languages in United Nations public

information materials and platforms, including various social media campaigns. In this regard, we encourage the Department to reinforce its efforts to continue narrowing the gap among the official languages on United Nations websites and, as a matter of priority, we reiterate the request to design a strategy to deliver daily press releases in all six official languages, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

In addition, we also reiterate our full support for the work of the United Nations Information Centers in disseminating information about the work of the United Nations in local languages. This will not only help overcome the language barrier faced by a large portion of the world population, but also enable them to participate in the discourse on global issues. We therefore encourage the Department to continue supporting them and strengthening their structure regarding both staffing and equipment.

Mr. Chair,

The Group recognizes the importance of information and communications technologies including social media and their positive potential to significantly amplify the United Nations messages to the widest possible audiences and to enhance greater interaction with the United Nations, in particular among the global youth population. However, the use of traditional media, including television and radio broadcast as well as print, must continue, since they still remain the primary means of public communications in many developing countries.

Despite their numerous benefits, information and communications technologies, including social media, can pose a risk of misuse and abuse. Inaccurate and distorted information can have a negative impact on nations and their citizens. The Group strongly rejects such practice and reiterates our position that the use of such technologies should be fully compatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, in particular the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs of States, and internationally recognized rules of civil coexistence among States.

The use of information and communications technologies with declared or covert purposes to subvert the legal and political order of States is a violation of the recognized international norms in this field, whose effects could generate tensions and conflicts which could also affect international peace and security.

Mr. Chair,

The Question of Palestine and the Middle East peace process deserve our special attention. The Group underscores the importance of the Special Information Program on the Question of Palestine in raising international awareness on this important issue and in supporting the political process to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. We commend the Department's efforts in this regard, including the annual training program for Palestinian journalists, aimed at strengthening skills and capacities of young Palestinian journalists, and call for their continuation and enhancement.

Mr. Chair,

The G77 emphasizes the importance of the continued implementation by the Department of Public Information of the ongoing Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries as mandated by the General Assembly, and requests the Department to consider how best to maximize the benefits derived from the

Programme by extending, inter alia, its duration and the number of its participants.

We also emphasize the importance of the educational outreach activities of the United Nations and this regard commends "the United Nations Academic Impact" (UNAI) for its engagement with the global academic, research and scientific communities in realizing the objectives of the Organization. The Group encourages promoting this initiative, by inviting more institutions of higher education in all regions, especially from developing countries, to contribute actively to, and support the common principles and purposes of the Organization.

Mr. Chair,

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to assure you of our continued and full support. We reiterate the commitment of the Group to work constructively with our partners, in order to achieve an outcome that will give the Department of Public Information guidance to better reach out to and connect with the peoples who are the true stakeholders of the Organization.

I thank you