



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY TUMASIE C. BLAIR, PERMANENT MISSION OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, AT THE THIRTIETH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (New York, 28 April 2008)

Mr. Chairman,

It is a privilege for me to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the commencement of the thirtieth session of the Committee on Information.

The Group extends deep appreciation to Under-Secretary General Mr. Kiyo Akasaka for his comprehensive and enlightening presentation on the strategies to be adopted by the Department of Public Information for the years to come.

The foundation of DPI's policies on Public Information is built on a collaborative effort of the Department and the Committee on Information. The continued development of this partnership is essential as DPI continues to play a pivotal role as the public voice in helping to strengthen the image of the United Nations.

It would be remiss not to pay special gratitude to the officers and staff of the Department of Public Information who have worked vigorously in carrying out the mandate of the Department.

Mr. Chairman,

DPI faces many challenges as it undertakes its function; today's media has a tendency of sensationalizing "bad news," thus creating an atmosphere of negativity surrounding the Organization. It is therefore critical for DPI to continuously and actively project the UN's ideals and accomplishments, intensify outreach and transmit the UN's message to all peoples of the world.

The G77 and China fully supports the work of the Department of Public Information in promoting and advancing the work of the organization through its continued campaigns on issues of importance to the international community. These issues include UN reform, the Millennium Development Goals, sustainable development, climate change, the dialogue among civilizations, culture of peace and tolerance, preventing genocide, the rights of women and children, HIV/AIDS as well as development on the African continent.

The Group of 77 and China commends the DPI for its implementation of the Special Programme on the Question of Palestine aimed at raising the awareness of the international community with regard to the Question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East.

The Programme is also useful in offering annual training program for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists from the Occupied Palestinian Territory to assist them in developing their media capacity and skills. These and other activities undertaken by the DPI in this regard have the full support of the Group of 77 and China.

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the Secretary General condemnation on the airing of Geert Wilders' offensive film. The film has not only hurt the sentiments of many cultural and religious groups but also threatens the stability of many societies. It is now all the more important that the DPI redouble its efforts not only to sensitize the media but also Member States on the need

to understand and respect various cultures and beliefs, in doing so the DPI will help to bridge the gap between various cultures and beliefs.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China highlights the importance of the Department as the public voice of the Organization and in providing accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to Member States and the wider international community on the work of the United Nations. We stress the importance of ensuring that there is a consistent message between the Department and any other entity, which provide information on the United Nations. As part of the efforts to enhance and strengthen accountability and transparency of the Organization, we believe that Member States should be able to first learn about important events affecting the United Nations through the official channels, including through the DPI, rather than through the outside media. The General Assembly has a Charter-mandated role of oversight on matters affecting the Secretariat and resources of the Organization. The interaction between the media and the Secretariat does not replace this Charter requirement for the Secretariat to report to Member States through the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman

The Group of 77 and China takes note of the report of the Secretary General on the Network of United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) activities and strategic direction. We urge that all possible measures be taken to strengthen the United Nations Information Centres (UNICs). These Centres are a vital source for the flow of information. They help to bridge the gap between the developed and developing economies in terms of access to information and communication technologies. We also support the call for allocation of adequate resources to ensure the effective functioning and strengthening of UN Information Centres. The G-77 and China wishes to underline that any decision pertaining to reorganization of UNICs must be made in close consultation with the host countries, and it must take into account the geographical, linguistic and technological characters of different regions.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China would like to express its support and appreciation to DPI in strengthens the UN websites in all official languages. The Group is of the view that the main goal should be the achievement of equality in presenting information on the websites in all official languages. In this regard, the G-77 is deeply concerned at the increasing gap among websites in different official languages. More resources should be allocated to achieve equality among all official languages in order to bridge this gap taking into account the specificity of some official languages which use non-Latin and bi-directional scripts.

The Group attaches the utmost importance to the continuation of the use of traditional media, including both radio and print, in disseminating the main messages of the United Nations, since traditional media remains the primary means of communication in developing countries. In this regard, we further encourage the DPI to continue building partnerships with local, national and regional broadcasters to extend the UN message to all corners of the world in an accurate, impartial and effective manner.

The Group of 77 and China has taken note of the proposals put forward by the Secretariat on renaming the library and also making the provision of library services relevant to the needs of Member States and more accessible to users. It is our view that any process to change the name and methods of operation of the United Nations Libraries should continue to respect the previously

agreed mandates and General Assembly resolutions relevant to libraries, and be subject to prior intergovernmental discussion and agreement. Furthermore, the G77 and China urges that the application of technological innovations for the provision of Library Services takes into account the physical and other challenges faced by Member States in being able to effectively utilize such technology.

The Group of 77 and China strongly urges the Department of Public Information to continue to impress upon the Secretariat and the Department of Safety and Security to implement measures that would allow press officers of Member States to gain access to areas that are deemed restricted, in order to effectively and comprehensively report on high-level meetings that would include officials of delegations of the Member States.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, allow me to assure you of the intention of the G77 and China to work constructively with the Bureau and other delegations in order to achieve a positive outcome of this session of the Committee on Information. Above all, we are reminded that the work of this Committee should be dedicated to ensuring that the DPI is made stronger and more effective so as to allow it to properly disseminate the messages of the United Nations.

I thank you.