

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Makarim Wibisono, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Indonesia and Chairman of the Group of 77, before the Fourth Committee of the 53rd Session of the General Assembly on Item 86 "Questions relating to information"

New York, 13 November 1998

Mr. Chairman,

It is a distinct honor and privilege for me to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Allow me at the outset, to extend the felicitations of the Group of 77 and China to you and all the members of the Bureau. We remain confident that your able stewardship will guide the deliberations of the Committee to a fruitful conclusion on this important item before us. The Group of 77 and China also wish to commend the Chairman of the Committee on Information, Mr. Jose Alberto de Sousa, for his skillful guidance in maintaining consensus in the Committee. Let me also express our appreciation to all colleagues in the Committee on Information who have shown a spirit of cooperation and flexibility during the Committee's session, thus making a positive outcome possible. Last but not least, our gratitude also goes to the Bureau of the Committee on Information for their valuable contributions.

The Group of 77 and China would like to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for the report on questions relating to information contained in document A/53/509. The Group would like to avail of this opportunity to also commend the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Mr. Kensaku Hogen, for the lucid and comprehensive account of the commendable work of the Department of Public Information (DPI). Let me also express appreciation to the Representative of UNESCO, Ms. Nina Sibal, for her presentation earlier.

Mr. Chairman,

Technological advances, notably those in the field of information and communications, are linking nations together as never before in history. The building of a new web of information and communications holds untold potential for solving some of the critical problems facing mankind, such as promoting the development of nations as well as the establishment of a new global order based on peace, security and social justice for all peoples. Furthermore, the post-cold war era presents unprecedented opportunities as well as challenges for strengthening multilateral cooperation in this vital and crucial field. Indeed, humankind has enormous resources now available to improve the living conditions of all.

Yet, unfortunately, the present day realities continue to reflect disparities between the developed and developing nations that adversely affect the capabilities of the developing countries to fully utilize information and communications technologies. It is in this overriding context that the Group of 77 and China are of the view that the mandate of the Committee on Information set out by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/182, remains equally relevant today as when it was first conceived in 1979. In this regard, it should be stressed that the need for ensuring the impartiality and balance in the information flow, improving the information and communication infrastructure and capacity of the developing countries through the transfer of advanced information technology and expanding their access to information is deemed more imperative than ever before.

On their part, the Group of 77 and China affirm the importance of South-South Cooperation in the field of information and communications, based on the principle of collective self-reliance. Such cooperation can be further enhanced through the sharing of development experiences, the transfer of technology and the harnessing of latent synergies and complementarities between the developing countries. Likewise, North-

South Cooperation needs to be developed on the basis of genuine partnership, in order for the developing countries to overcome the technical, financial and other difficulties and become equal partners in the age of information and communications.

The Group of 77 and China wishes to commend the International Program for Development and Communication (IPDC) of UNESCO. It is an important element in the implementation of its strategy adopted by consensus for communication in the service of humanity, based on international cooperation. This program is an essential instrument for the development of global communication and information in general and the further enhancement of infrastructures as well as the strengthening of information and communication capabilities of the developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

It can not be denied that the international scene is overwhelmed by a revolution of information. The media has therefore an important role to play in disseminating objective and impartial information while taking into account the unique social and cultural traditions of each specific region. In developing the mass media for the years to come, it is most relevant to stress the need for professionalism, ethics as well as a sense of self-defined responsibility.

The contemporary realities reflect that we live in a world of rapid flux and change which is bound to be fundamentally transformed as we stand on the threshold of the next millennium. In a changing world order, the successful conclusion of the mandate of the DPI is crucial, including in this regard, the mobilization of global opinion concerning the goals and objectives of the United Nations as well as the critical questions that it is seized with. We have noted the Secretary-General's report that the Department of Public Information, as part of its new orientation, "is putting hard news at the core of its operations in radio, television and print." Indeed, this is of particular interest to the developing nations—whose peoples comprise the majority of mankind—that the United Nations continues its endeavors in enhancing those traditional mediums of information. We stress, in this regard, the need to accord equal respect to all the official languages of the the United Nations.

We have also taken careful note of the report, that "technological progress has perhaps its most profound impact in the communications and information field, with the Internet leading the information revolution." In this regard, we would like to stress that the United Nations homepage and all its sites are, in essence, a publication. Therefore, we request that the Secretary-General regard it on the same basis as its other publications, and ensure that those websites contain comprehensive, objective and balanced information on all issues before the Organization. Equally important, is the need to maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly.

The Group of 77 and China takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the development of United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity contained in document A/AC.198/1998/4. We trust that the views expressed during the deliberations of the Committee on Information, which include, *inter alia*, the importance attached to these initiatives, the importance of maintaining the existing radio programmes, the importance of linguistic diversity of membership of the Organization, and the importance of the widest area coverage possible, will be taken into account. The Group looks forward to considering the next report to be submitted by the Secretary-General on this matter to the forthcoming session of the Committee on Information.

As to the United Nations Public Information Centers (UNICs), the Group of 77 and China notes with concern the problems posed by some instances of integration with UNDP and maintains that a reappraisal is called for to redress those situations. We emphasize the need to preserve the independence of UNICs, maintain their effectiveness and strengthen their work. In this regard, it should be recalled that the General Assembly have

stressed in various resolutions that the process of integration should be implemented on a case-by-case basis while taking into account the views of the host state. Simultaneously, the views of Member States should be taken into serious consideration during the development of proposals concerning the restructuring of UNICs and the establishment of regional hubs by the Secretary-General. Moreover, it is important that the necessary resources continue to be allocated to UNICs for their effective functioning, particularly in developing countries.

In this regard, we look forward to studying the Secretary-General's report on the review of earlier cases of integration of UNICs as called for in paragraph 87 of resolution 52/220, to be taken up at the twenty-first session of the Committee on Information.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, the Group of 77 and China views with optimism that the future deliberations of the Committee on Information will continue to resolve, through a spirit of harmony, flexibility and cooperation, important issues before us and in bringing the full impact of information and communication technologies for the benefit of all countries. The Group of 77 and China stands ready to working with other Member States in realizing this goal.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.