



STATEMENT BY H.E. MOHAMED BENNOUNA, AMBASSADOR, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF MOROCCO ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA, AT THE 25TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (New York, 28 April 2003)

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to extend to you, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, my warmest congratulations, for your election as president of the 25th session of the Committee on Information. I would also like to express our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

I avail myself of this opportunity to assure you, Mr. Chairman, of the full support of the Group of 77 and China in leading the work of this session to a successful outcome.

I would also like to express our gratitude to Ambassador Milos Alcalay, Permanent Representative of Venezuela for having successfully presided over the deliberations of the 24th session of the Committee.

Our thanks go as well to M. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary General for information for his comprehensive and enlightening presentation on the strategy to be adopted by the Department of Public Information for the years to come. We would also like to congratulate him and his staff for the relentless efforts they have been making at the service of information and communication. Lastly, I would like to say how much we appreciate the reports submitted for our consideration by the Secretary General, at this session.

Mr. Chairman,

The new challenges ahead of the United Nations and its members are constantly provoking thought on the ways and means of enhancing this Organization efficacy as well as on the necessary action that would enable it to adapt its structure and functions to the new international environment.

In this process of revitalization and adaptation, the Department of Public Information is one of the key units that will play a significant and evolving role. It is indeed this Department which assumes the important task of projecting the image of the United Nations to the public, of explaining its role and showing the impact of its action on international relations and, most importantly, on the lives of peoples.

Any institution, Mr. Chairman, especially one of the scope of the United Nations is required to act and inform about its action; it must acquire and disseminate information; it also has to interact and communicate with its environment, absorb and assimilate its feedback and reaction in order for it to regenerate and serve better.

The importance of the mandate of our Committee stems from this. Its action is crucial in ensuring the dissemination of information on a wider scale and in a balanced way. We therefore need an enhanced, reactivated and restructured Department of Public Information that has the capacity to elaborate coherent communication strategies and to benefit from the new communication technologies.

Yet, the Secretary General noted in his report A/57/387, on the reform of the Organization that the

Department of Public Information has suffered from a fragmentation of its efforts as a result of too many mandates and missions. The restructuring process necessitated by this situation should be followed closely and consolidated under the supervision of Committee on Information, which should be regularly informed of the results and implications of this process.

In that same report, the Secretary General suggested a number of measures aimed at enhancing information and repositioning the Department of Public Information.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China has already expressed its opinion, in due course, on the envisaged reform and especially on the measures impacting the Department of Public Information.

While recalling its principled positions on this reform, the Group of 77 and China would like to comment briefly on those measures:

-The Group of 77 and China notes with attention the progressive restructuring of the Department of Public Information

-However, this process should not be conducted at the expense of the programs related to the priority developmental issues such as conflict prevention, poverty eradication, HIV/AIDS, dialogue among civilizations and cultures, sustainable development and the needs of Africa.

-Concerning the restructuring of the United Nations information centers, we would like to stress their importance for the developing countries, especially the least developing countries, as valuable sources of information and means of communication and interaction with the host countries.

-The preservation of these centers is all the more important that those countries suffer from an acute shortage of the necessary infrastructure and human resources to reap the benefits of the new information and communication technologies.

-In addition, the envisaged restructuring should be undertaken on a case by case basis in consultation with the concerned countries.

-Pending the bridging of the digital divide and the dissemination of the new information technologies which will be the focus of deliberations at the World Summit on information, in its two phases to be held in Geneva and Tunis, the Group of 77 and China remain committed to preserving and consolidating the traditional means of communication, such as radio broadcasting, which have an undeniable impact in remote areas.

-While expressing its satisfaction for the progress achieved since the creation the United Nations website, the Group of 77 and China would like to reiterate the need for a strict observance of multilingualism, which reflects the richness and diversity of the international community and strengthens the values of tolerance and mutual respect.

Mr. Chairman,

We truly acknowledge the complex, difficult and important nature of the tasks entrusted to the Department of Public Information of the United Nations. These tasks are consistent with the role this Organization should play, namely, in regulating the inter-state relations and acting as a catalyst of international cooperation.

We are likewise convinced that the on-going reform of the United Nations implies a continuous improvement of the U.N policy in the field of information.

The Group of 77 and China stands ready to work together with other regional groups in a constructive spirit in order to achieve results, during this session that would impact positively on the quality of information provided by the United Nations.

We hope that the same spirit would prevail during this session so as to enable the Committee to continue its contribution to the consolidation of the vital and unique role played by the United Nations in our world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.