



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY AMBASSADOR NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STATE OF QATAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, CHAIRMAN OF THE GROUP OF 77, BEFORE THE 26TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (New York, 26 April 2004)

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I would like at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on the exemplary way you led the work of this Committee last year. We are confident that your expertise and wisdom will continue to contribute to the success of the work of the Committee this year as well.

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 Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, for presenting the reports of the Secretary-General today and for his efforts in leading the Department of Public Information.

Mr. Chairman,

The Department of Public Information 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 actions.

The Committee on Information is crucial in ensuring the dissemination of information on a wider scale and in a balanced way. We hope that the restructured and reactivated DPI will be able to elaborate coherent communication strategies to that effect.

The Group of 77 and China strongly maintains that the challenge of the DPI is not only to ensure a wider outreach of the communication strategies but also to contribute to the concretization of the UN goals and objectives as set out in the Millennium Declaration and in the Medium-Term Plan.

The work of DPI would, therefore, be guided to achieving these goals and objectives, in particular to promoting priority development issues such as poverty eradication, HIV/AIDS, dialogue among civilizations and cultures, sustainable development and the needs of African countries.

Mr. Chairman,

The Group of 77 and China stresses that the UN Information Centres play a significant role in disseminating information, in promoting public awareness of and mobilizing support for the work of the United Nations.

The Group of 77 and China takes note of the Secretary-General's report on the rationalization of the network of United Nations Information Centres (A/AC.198/2004/3). In this regard, the Group believes it is premature to present proposals on further regionalization. Enough time should be given to examine the results and possible added value of the creation of the Western European hub before presenting any new proposals, which should take into account, among other factors, the existing differences in information technology and communications between Western Europe and other regions of developing countries.

The Group emphasizes the need to allocate adequate resources for the effective functioning and strengthening of the UNICs of developing countries.

The Group welcomes the holding of the Geneva phase of the World Summit on the Information Society which adopted a Declaration and a Plan of Action and we look forward to the second phase in Tunis to be held from 16 to 18 November 2005. The Tunis phase should come up with concrete initiatives at all levels to bridge the digital divide and to place Information and Communications Technologies at the service of development.

The Group highlights the importance of the constructive participation of the international community. We hope that all stakeholders will be represented at the highest level. We also stress that the United Nations should play a central role in the preparatory process of the Summit and in the Summit itself. In this regard, we call on the DPI to contribute

in raising awareness of the international community of the importance of the WSIS and the need to join efforts to make it a success.

The Group of 77 and China would like to express its support and appreciation to the work of the administration of public information at the U.N Secretariat to strengthen 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 G-77 and China reaffirms in this context paragraph 42 of General Assembly resolution 58/270, which requests the Secretary-General to strengthen the websites through further redeployment to the language posts required.

The Group of 77 and China notes the recommendations of the Department of Public Information for developing a communications strategy on publicizing the work and decisions of the General Assembly and encourages the Department to establish a closer working relationship with the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

The Group also welcomes the progress achieved since the commencement of the reorientation exercise in enhancing the performance and effectiveness of the Department of Public Information in accordance with the mandates established by the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information. In this regard, the Group notes the result reflected in the first annual programme impact review and requests the Secretary-General to continue to present such reports to the Committee on Information at its successive sessions.

Mr. Chairman,

We attach the utmost importance to the information policies and communication strategies regarding peacekeeping operations. Many Member States, most of them from our Group, are strongly committed to these operations and even endure the loss of their nationals in pursuing the noble goal of international peace. Therefore, we are gravely concerned about the "information gap" that exists between the new realities and success of peacekeeping operations and the perceptions the public have, as stated in the Secretary-General's report A/58/694. The closing of this gap is one of the ways to "concretize the UN goals and objectives", and a measure of the success of DPI.

This Committee has often recalled the importance of close coordination between the Department of Public Information and other Departments, especially the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. We deem this coordination essential in order to maximize the efficiency and efficacy of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

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 have a positive impact on the quality of information provided by the United Nations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.