

**Statement by Ambassador Bagher Asadi, Chairman of the Group of 77 (Islamic Republic of Iran), before the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) on Agenda item 90: Questions relating to information 56th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**New York, 19 November 2001**

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me, at the very outset, to extend the felicitations of the Group of the 77 and China to you. It is such a great pleasure to have you shepherding our work. We remain confident that your able stewardship will guide our deliberations on this item and the work of the Committee to a fruitful conclusion. The Group of 77 and China also wishes to commend the distinguished Chairman of the Committee on Information, Ambassador Milos Alcalay of Venezuela – and the incoming Chair of G-77 - for his skillful guidance in maintaining consensus in the course of deliberation and adoption of the resolution of the 23rd session of the Committee on Information, and also for the very concise and rich statement he just made. Let me also express our profound thanks and appreciation to all colleagues in the Committee on Information for their spirit of cooperation and flexibility during the Committee's session, which made reaching the positive outcome possible. And finally, the Group of 77 and China wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General and DPI for the report on the twenty-third session of the Committee on Information contained in document A/56/21 and to Mr. Shashi Tharoor, the Interim Head of DPI, for his energetic and commendable work, and also for the excellent, detailed and quite wide-ranging presentation he made a while ago.

Mr. Chairman,

Information and communications are considered the most valuable product of the twenty first century, and its rapid progress has created a great amount of hope among all countries in general and in particular, in developing countries. These countries, while recognizing that information and communication technology revolution opens vast new opportunities for them in the field of economic growth and social development, witness that it has as well posed many challenges and risks to them which could lead even to further widening of disparities between them and the developed countries. The majority of the world population still lives in poverty and remains untouched by ICT revolution and the emerging new economy – characterized by rapidly increasing reliance on information and knowledge – still remains concentrated in developed countries.

Overcoming the gap in the information and communication technologies between the developed and developing countries requires genuine international cooperation and assistance by developed countries. Developing countries themselves should also cooperate with each other, especially through South-South Cooperation. In this context, let me draw your attention to the provisions of the Tehran Consensus, which was adopted by the tenth meeting of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among developing Countries (IFCC-X) in late August this year. The Consensus recognized “bridging the knowledge and information gap” as one of the five strategic objectives of the long-term South-South cooperation. We believe the United Nations system should play a key role in this process by bridging the digital divide through promoting and accelerating universal access to ITC and contributing to the development of the norms and standards on a transparent, meaningful and participatory basis. Unless access to and use of ITC is broadened, the majority of people particularly in the developing countries will not enjoy the benefits of the knowledge-based economy.

The Heads of State and Government of the developing world stated, in the South Summit back in April 2000 in Havana, Cuba, that the vast benefits of information technology should reach all humankind by undertaking efforts to make it more widely accessible to and within developing countries. Moreover, the Millennium Declaration, adopted here in new York a few month later, further underlined that we should ensure that the

benefits of information and communication technologies are available to all.

It should be quite a positive development that the United Nations ICT Task Force will be launched officially tomorrow. We look forward to its operation and wish it good luck in serving the objectives it has been created for.

Mr. Chairman,

Turning to the United Nations public information policies and activities, we continue to emphasize that there must be a new, more just and effective global information and communication order, based on a free and balanced flow of information to all people.

We believe the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization. It is necessary that DPI increase its outreach activities in all regions, bearing in mind local language requirements, identify the widest possible spectrum of audiences and geographical areas which are not covered adequately. I was very happy to hear that Mr. Tharoor referred to the efforts of DPI to publicize major international, multilateral processes, particularly the WSSD in Johannesburg and Financing for Development Conference in Mexico. Three days ago my Foreign Minister, chairing the Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77, asked the Secretary-General to use his office and authority to promote the Mexico Conference and place it on the political radar of the Heads of State and Government on a global scale.

We would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring the full equitable treatment of all the six official languages of the United Nations in the activities of the Department of Public Information and ensuring appropriate staffing capacity in all official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities

The United Nations Information Centers, as the “field voice” of the Department of the Public Information, should promote public awareness and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, in particular in the areas of economic and social development and United Nations peacekeeping operations. We believe further efforts are needed to ensure the most equitable disbursement possible of resources to the United Nations Information Centers. We appreciate the efforts made by United Nations Information Centers to develop their own web pages in local languages and encourage DPI to provide them with necessary resources and technical facilities. We would like to underline that in case of possible integration of the United Nations Information Centers; the operational and functional independence of centers should be maintained.

The role of the Department of the Public Information in promotional campaigns is also very significant and we commend the important role that it has played in implementing the promotional campaign and encourage it to continue to cooperate with countries and relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in this field.

Mr. Chairman,

Traditional means of communication, and in particular, radio, is still the most used and available medium for millions of listeners across the globe, especially in developing countries. We would like to seize the opportunity to thank, once again, our distinguished colleagues who actively participated in the resumed session of the Committee on Information, where outstanding paragraphs related to the traditional means of communication were finalized.

And to conclude, Mr. Chairman, let me add that the Group of 77 and China looks forward to the 24th session of the Committee on Information to continue to focus on the outstanding issues and resolve them through a spirit of cooperation and flexibility, which needless to say, will be geared towards bringing the full impact of information and communication technologies for the benefit of all countries.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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