

Statement by H.E. Mr. Stafford Neil, Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the United Nations, on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) (29 April 2003)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the fourteen member states of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which are members of the United Nations, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Bahamas, Dominica, Haiti, Grenada, Guyana, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own, Jamaica.

I have great pleasure in congratulating you on your election as Chairman of this Committee. CARICOM is confident that under your astute and able guidance, the deliberations of this year's session of the Committee will have a positive outcome. I also wish to express my appreciation to Ambassador Milos Alcalay, for his admirable chairmanship of the Committee during the previous two sessions.

Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Under-Secretary General for Communications and Public Information, should be commended for the timely submission of the reports before the Committee for its consideration. The Department of Public Information is to be congratulated for the quality of these reports which will be useful to the Committee as it seeks to fulfil its mandate in providing direction and guidance to the department. I also wish to thank Mr. Tharoor for his comprehensive overview of the current work of the Department which was provided to the Committee at its opening session.

CARICOM delegations align themselves fully with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. CARICOM would wish however to elaborate on a number of issues which are of special significance to us as a region.

Reorientation

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM delegations have noted with interest the report prepared by the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and

Radio

Mr. Chairman,

The recent survey on the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations has indicated that these programmes reach approximately 133 million people. Of this figure approximately 1.5 million listeners are from the Caribbean region. This would seem to highlight the importance of radio as a universal, accessible medium. CARICOM therefore advocates the continuation of this project and urges that resources continue to be devoted to this activity.

We are pleased with the programming provided by the Caribbean Radio Unit of the DPI through the United Nations Radio in the Caribbean. The use of improved technology and linkages has increased the speed and access of radio programmes to the Caribbean. Additionally, the keen interest exhibited by listeners in the Caribbean has meant that radio stations continue to request this programme. We note that radio stations in other Caribbean countries are also requesting access to the radio programme and we support the work of the Secretariat in facilitating these requests.

Mr. Chairman,

CARICOM is gratified to learn that since January 2003, there have been positive efforts by the DPI to broadcast radio programmes in Creole to Haiti as mandated by resolution 38/82 B of 15 December 1983. CARICOM takes this opportunity to express its appreciation to the DPI for its work in this area.

Additionally in noting the improved management of the library's resources as well as depository libraries, CARICOM wishes to underscore its support for the regional training programmes for depository librarians in developing countries.

United Nations Information Centres (UNIC)

Mr. Chairman,

As part of the process of UN reform, steps are being taken to rationalise the network of UN information centres through the creation of regional hubs so as to better serve the needs of the Organisation and provide for more effective use of resources.

While such rationalisation is intended to take place following consultations with the concerned countries, CARICOM reiterates that the establishment of such regional hubs take place on a case-by-case basis, sensitive to the unique needs and interests of the region involved.

The UNIC, in many cases, remains a vital link between the UN Organisation and the people it serves. It is in this regard that CARICOM reaffirms the importance of the United Nations Information Centre in Port of Spain, Trinidad and calls for timely attention to its staffing and other requirements.

CARICOM also reaffirms the importance of the establishment of the enhanced information component in the UNDP Multi-Island Office in Kingston, Jamaica to serve as a complement to the UNIC office in Port of Spain. We look forward to the early completion of this project.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to make mention of the important role played by journalists both in live broadcast and in the print medium in the communication and dissemination of information. Events over

Thank you.