

Statement by Mr. Narayan Dev Pant, Minister Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations (1 May 2007)

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as Chairman of this prestigious Committee. The other members of the Bureau deserve our felicitations. My delegation is fully assured that with your wisdom and diplomatic skills, the Committee will succeed in executing its mandated tasks in an efficient and effective manner.

I wish to welcome H.E. Mr. Kiyoo Akasaka as the new Under-Secretary-General for Communication and Public Information, and also thank him for his insightful remarks on the activities of the DPI. I believe that under his able leadership, the DPI will achieve a new height as the mouthpiece of the United Nations. Let me also take this opportunity to put on record our profound appreciation to his predecessor Mr. Shashi Tharoor for his outstanding performance during his tenure as the Head of the Department.

My delegation is pleased to see Dominican Republic and Thailand as new members, which is a testimony to the growing importance of the Committee.

While associating itself with the statement delivered by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, my delegation wishes to outline a few issues that impinge on our concerns.

Mr. Chairman,

It is gratifying to note that the DPI's has done a commendable job through its outreach campaigns to cover populations around the world. Particularly, its efforts to reach the target audiences by using both traditional means of communication, that is print, television and radio, and the new information and communication technology like internet and UN website for advancing the common agenda of the United Nations, have immensely contributed to the enhancement of its public image as well as substantive purposes. Over the last few years, the strategic approach adopted by the DPI to its work has had positive effects in achieving a good level of public impact on issues that matter most to the global community. In this context, we appreciate the works of the United Nations Communications Group which is working as a platform for promoting the common agenda of the United Nations system. The DPI work on a number of crucial issues from UN reforms to training of journalists to peacekeeping operations, among others, has undoubtedly generated enthusiasm and momentum on a global scale. As one of the largest troop-contributing countries to the UN peacekeeping operations, Nepal very much appreciates the DPI's efforts to highlight the peacekeeping matters. It is our view that the Department should intensify its coordination with the DPKO so that it can present the peacekeeping issues to the peoples of the world in their proper perspectives.

Mr. Chairman,

Notwithstanding the various measures taken by the Department, the developing countries, mostly the LDCs, are constrained by the acute paucity in the field of communication. Although it is a positive indication that more than 1.1 million pages of the UN website are viewed daily, only a fraction of the rural population has access to such-modem means of communication. No doubt the DPI has made efforts in the dissemination of information to a wide constituency through its television and radio programs which are quite popular in the rural areas in the developing countries. As radio constitutes the most popular means of information in the developing countries, it is imperative that audio programs in the local languages, as far as possible and practical, are given due priority...

Mr. Chairman,

The addition of new pages in terms of achieving progress towards parity among official languages is a welcome development. In this context, my delegation is of the view that the principle of parity should -also extend to radio and television programs aimed at the rural population in the developing countries. This would help to a certain extent in narrowing the "digital divide" that the developing world has been decrying at all relevant forums.

Mr. Chairman,

As the Secretary-General has rightly spelt out in his report on the network of the United Nations information centres: activities and strategic directions, "the UNICs are key to the work of the Department of Public Information, giving its global work a local accent". We support the communication strategies of the DPI which considers that the information centres play a pivotal role as implementing agencies of these strategies. While we consider the creation of the United Nations Communication Group as a vital tool in this direction, the UNICs are the life-lines in the successful functioning of this body. As such, the UNICs need to be revamped and strengthened as focal points in sensitizing the local people about the activities of the United Nations. As a matter of priority, UNICs in the developing countries should be better equipped and bolstered through allocation of increased resources so as to make them user-friendly and effective in keeping with the needs and priorities of the host countries. My delegation would like to reiterate that any decisions regarding these centres should be guided by the sole aim of enhancing the image and outreach capacity of the United Nations as a common man's centre of hope. It is our principled position that proper assessment of the specific needs and conditions of each centre, and prior consultation with the host countries should be conducted before such a step is considered by the DPI.

In this regard, we wish to reiterate that the UNIC in Kathmandu needs to be upgraded and further strengthened in order to ultimately convert it into a regional hub.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, we assure the DPI of our full support in its ongoing reform initiatives in achieving the shared goal of establishing a more just, balanced and effective world information and communication order.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.