

Statement by Mr. V.K. Nambiar, Permanent Representative on Agenda item 86: Questions relating to Information at the Special Political and Decolonisation Committee (Fourth Committee) of the 58th session of the UN General Assembly on October 28, 2003

Mr. Chairman,

We congratulate Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor for the excellent presentation made yesterday, highlighting major developments within the DPI in the past year and the priorities and challenges ahead. And, indeed, much has happened. A renewed DPI, with a new organisational structure, new priorities and new goals is in place. Reform is both complex and difficult and cannot be completed with a single step; yet, we remain confident that under the dynamic leadership of Mr. Tharoor, this ongoing process will see its logical culmination. We assure him and his team of our whole-hearted support in these endeavours.

We associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Morocco yesterday in his capacity as Chairman of G-77.

Mr. Chairman,

Earlier this year at its annual session, the Committee on Information considered the various reports of the Secretary General contained in documents A/AC/198/2003/2-6 on the reform and revitalisation of the DPI, and broadly supported these (A/58/21). The section on Enhancing Public Information contained in the Secretary General's report "Strengthening of the United Nations: An Agenda for Further Change" (A/58/351) gives an additional update on the ongoing reform process.

I should like to take this opportunity to reiterate my delegation's whole-hearted support to the ongoing process of change. DPI is the "voice" of the United Nations, and in order to tell its story well, it must be vibrant, dynamic and constantly evolving. And never has this role been more important than today, when so many questions are being raised about the future of the Organisation. The Department should intensify its campaign to promote the purposes and principles of the United Nations and multilateralism, more relevant today than ever; a restructured, revitalised and well-equipped DPI is more likely to do so, and, to borrow language from its new mission statement, to "the greatest public impact".

We would like to highlight the following aspects on **reform**:

- Reorientation must meet the aspirations of the developing world and succeed in correcting the current bias against it in the field of information and technology. The need for information is most critically felt in the developing world which does not have a plethora of options at its disposal and the UN must make a special effort to reach out to target audiences here. This “digital divide” should not remain rhetorical or a cliché; it must be bridged.
- The focus should continue to be on the core social and economic developmental issues which remain areas of high priority for the developing countries which form the vast majority of the UN’s membership. We would encourage the DPI to do more in terms of highlighting the critical developmental issues, and the work of the Organisation in addressing them.

In addition, at a more **general level**, we would like to add the following:

- The proposal to ensure a seamless transition from United Nations Information Centres (UNICs) at the national level to regional hubs, in particular in the high cost developed countries, is a worthy one, where these centers drain away a major chunk of the DPI’s resources. We are in agreement that resources thus released could be diverted to other areas identified as priorities.
- As regards application of the “hub approach” to other regions, we would continue to urge circumspection. The process must move ahead on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the countries concerned. We look forward to the report of the Secretary General on implementation of the proposal in Western Europe and to further discussions on this in the Committee on Information next year, before the process is replicated in other regions.
- The decision to implement an Annual Programme Impact Review is a particularly useful one, making self-evaluation a part of the daily work of all programme managers, with a view to institutionalising performance management. Self-evaluation and performance management are integral to the success of the reform efforts of DPI. These techniques will enable DPI to adapt itself to the constantly evolving new challenges, while also weeding out what is non-performing, outmoded and unnecessary. Cost- effectiveness of the resources required, however, must form a vital part of the proposal and should be borne in mind.
- Many developing countries lack the necessary resources and infrastructure to benefit from the rapid advances in information and communication technologies. Within this context, the radio remains one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching traditional media available to the DPI and an important instrument in UN’s information activities, including on development

and peacekeeping, with a view to achieving a broad client- base around the world. We would encourage the DPI to continue enhancing the UN's capacities in this regard and towards this end, to continue building partnerships with local, national and regional broadcasters to extend the UN's message to all corners of the world.

- We support reform aimed at integrating the management of UN libraries and to step up their modernisation. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the decision to establish a multi-lingual UN libraries research gateway on the internet and the creation of a master list of core areas of specialization at United Nations libraries, which should go a long way towards achieving a more effective, efficient and accessible system within the United Nations.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)