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# General Assembly

## PI/2051

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Committee on Information  
Thirty-fifth Session  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Meetings (AM & PM)

### **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION SHOULD BALANCE GOALS OF BROADER MULTILINGUAL**

### **COVERAGE WITH EFFECTIVE BLEND OF TRADITIONAL, NEW MEDIA USE, SAY SPEAKERS**

#### **Communications Chief, Closing General Debate, Hails Member States' New Ideas As Essential Building Blocks for Making Department Better Voice of United Nations**

The United Nations' Department of Public Information must perform a balancing act in expanding multilingual coverage of issues within the existing financial and human resources and finding the right mix of traditional and new media to tackle emerging communication challenges, delegates told the Committee on Information today as it concluded its general debate.

Dominating discussion throughout the day was the critical importance of multilingualism, as well as the role played by United Nations Information Centres, the disquieting digital divide and its impact on access to United Nations information, and the need to balance new forms of media and technology with more traditional ones.

On multilingualism, Argentina's delegation expressed concern that press releases were still published in only two official United Nations languages — English and French. He, however, joined several envoys from Spanish-speaking countries in welcoming the pilot project of the Department of Public Information and that of General Assembly and Conference Management to translate the releases into Spanish. Yet, most agreed, that was only "a first step" in making them available in all official languages.

He called for prompt implementation, within existing resources, of a strategy aimed at publication of the press releases in all official languages. As a first stage, the releases could be issued in the rest of the official languages at regular intervals and during predetermined timeframes. Languages could even be rotated during that initial stage. Alternatively, the editorial criteria, length and frequency of existing press releases could be modified to make room for new teams to write press releases in the other official languages.

China's representative pointed out that page views of the Chinese, Arabic and Russian languages combined accounted for only 13 per cent of the total. Given the number of countries and people using those languages, the proportion was obviously too low. The number of online video programmes in Chinese was also relatively small, and there should be more live coverage and webcasts in Chinese.

The delegate from Burkina Faso was among many speakers who noted the importance of traditional media in reaching audiences in developing countries. He hailed the Department for maintaining radio and other traditional media and for promoting multilingualism in all its products and services.

He said the Information Centre in Ouagadougou, which serviced the Sahel region of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad, played a vital role in raising awareness about important development issues and informing large groups of people, notably on poverty eradication, food insecurity and natural disasters.

Social media was spotlighted as an effective tool in disseminating information, especially among young audiences. Israel's speaker, for example, commended the Department for keeping pace with the rapid advance of technology, and welcomed its flexible and skilful use of social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter to help spread its message, as well as of the latest social media tools, including Pinterest and Google+, to engage as many youths as possible.

The representative of the Russian Federation saluted the creation of Twitter and Facebook accounts in Russian and agreed that it was important to listen attentively to the demands of young audiences. While efforts by United Nations Radio's Russian service to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the daily 15-minute radio programmes were welcome, she cautioned that the transition to multimedia tools must not harm that daily programme. Uninterrupted, quality broadcasting must be maintained during the transition to new hardware and software.

Egypt's delegate called for further attention to Arabic radio services in the Middle East. He lauded the efforts of the Information Centre in Cairo, which provided important services in the region in sensitive circumstances. To ensure that the United Nations message reached all sectors of the public worldwide, he agreed that multilingualism and language parity were essential, and he encouraged the Department to bolster efforts towards that end.

Closing the general debate, Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, told delegations: "Your new ideas will serve as essential building blocks for making [the Department of Public Information] a better and more effective voice of your Organization, the United Nations."

Also speaking today were the representatives of South Africa, Chile, United States, Costa Rica, Belarus, Oman, Republic of the Congo, Iran, Cuba, Ukraine, Mexico, India, Lebanon and Venezuela.

An observer from the State of Palestine also participated, as did representatives from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

The Committee will meet again at 3 p.m. on Thursday, 2 May, to conclude its work.

### Background

The Committee on Information met this morning to continue its general debate. For more information, please see Press Release [PI/2049](#) of 19 April.

### Statements

MANIEMAGEN GOVENDER ([South Africa](#)), associating with the statement of the Group of 77 developing countries and China, said that the voice of the United Nations must be heard clearly by all. The Department's efforts would help broaden global support for the United Nations and enhance the latter's credibility. The Department must pay particular attention to, among others, peace and security, development, human rights, poverty eradication, sustain development, climate change, the rights of people with HIV/AIDS and disabilities, disarmament and the special needs of Africa and of the least developed countries. Conveying the work and purposes of United Nations in a meaningful, beneficial way required the distribution of accurate, comprehensive and balanced information to the global public, with the content at the core of United Nations strategic management. The United Nations could not achieve its purposes unless the peoples of the world were fully informed of its activities. The Department must also pay close attention

to promoting the Millennium Development Goals and put greater focus on progress already made.

He noted the increasing references to the new technology platforms, which were vital for achieving poverty eradication and sustainable development. He urged a clearer picture of their targeted use, and consideration of whether they served the broader objectives of United Nations. The digital disparity must be addressed, and the emphasis on traditional means of communications, such as radio, television and print, must continue. He fully supported creation of a United Nations Information Centre in Luanda, Angola and hoped it would soon become operational. He applauded the Department for supporting the national "Nelson Mandela campaign" and was encouraged by efforts of the Department's Africa Section to publicly disseminate information. The Department should also enhance public information support in post-conflict situations, careful to avoid giving preference to certain missions. Also welcome would be greater support of the decolonization agenda. The Information Centre in Pretoria, could be strengthened, and there was ample scope for regional cooperation among the Centres.

OCTAVIO ERRÁZURIZ (Chile), aligning with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of 77 developing nations and China, appreciated a comprehensive briefing by the Under-Secretary-General and recognized the role of the Public Information Department to disseminate United Nations messages, including objective coverage of sensitive and priority issues, such as peace and security, development, human rights and fundamental freedom. The Department's role lay in telling stories and tackling the challenges of telling them better and catering to diverse global audiences. While acknowledging the benefit of new technologies, he called for an appropriate balance between the use of traditional media and that of emerging technologies, in light of the digital divide.

He said it was vital to ensure parity among the United Nations official languages, and while he recognized progress made in that area, his delegation looked forward to the establishment of a mechanism that could fully meet that aspiration. In that regard, he welcomed a pilot plan of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to translate United Nations press releases into Spanish. Yet, that was only "a first step" towards issuing press releases in all official languages.

DONNA ANN WELTON ( United States) commended the Department's creativity and thoughtfulness in commemorating the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Freedom of expression was a universal human right. All individuals were entitled to the same freedoms online and offline, and all Governments must protect those rights regardless of the medium. It was necessary to recognize the importance of journalists, bloggers and dissidents to write and speak freely without retribution. She agreed with Assembly resolution 67/123 that the lack of communications infrastructure and capacity in developing countries sometimes impeded access to quality information that could underpin expanding economic opportunities and an improved quality of life. That was why the United States was part of the Alliance for Affordable Internet, which sought to enable the next billion users in low-income countries to obtain Internet access for less than 5 per cent of their monthly income.

She said her country supported a variety of training programmes that provided journalists and bloggers with investigative tools; training in the area of security was also vital to enable them to report without endangering themselves. She welcomed United Nations leadership and partnerships in that area. The United States and other Member States had called on the United Nations to increase steps to maximize existing resources and enhance the use of technology to increase efficiency. She appreciated the Department's efforts towards that end. The strategic goals and clear vision for the Department's work in strategic communications, news and outreach and knowledge services were important first steps. She joined the consensus on the resolution this year on the Department's activities, but said the process was better served by avoiding political or divisive issues in information sharing and awareness raising.

SAUL WEISLEDER (Costa Rica), aligning with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of 77 developing nations and China, said the Secretary-General's reports were analytical and highlighted the proactive manner in which the Department was tackling the challenges. He commended the three divisions of the Department for their efforts, including to forge partnerships and reorganize their structures. New technologies could serve to empower traditional media among audiences

that lacked new technologies. At the same time, traditional media, such as television, radio, photograph and print, must reach audiences outside the network of new media.

He recognized the Department's coverage of thematic priority issues, including peace and security, climate change, human rights, development in Africa and the question of Palestine. Particularly vital was the Department's work to facilitate the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals. He also appreciated greater access to information for persons with disabilities and youth. Multilingualism was important to his delegation, which believed that United Nations voices must be conveyed in all six official languages. In that regard, he welcomed the pilot project to translate press releases into Spanish.

There was no magical solution to meeting the challenges, he said, adding however, that three things could be done. First, all States should be up to date in making contributions. Second, expectations and mandates should be realistic, and third, reform and partnerships must be implemented efficiently. There was abundant evidence that open, free and participatory processes were indispensable for the well-being of any society. The "Freedom of the Press" event on 3 May, convened in Costa Rica by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), was clear recognition that his nation upheld those processes.

ISI YANOUKA (Israel) lauded the Department for keeping pace with the rapid advance of technology, welcomed its flexible and skilful use of social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter to help spread its message, as well as of the latest social media tools, including Pinterest and Google+, to engage as many youths as possible. He encouraged the Department to continue sponsoring Model United Nations simulations worldwide and organizing student conferences at Headquarters. In an age of short attention span, it was important to find new ways to instil the passion of global civic participation in the next generation. Last month, the Department helped facilitate the Israeli delegation's concert in the Assembly Hall by Iranian-born Israeli artist Rita. Her performance, which brought together diplomats and members of New York's Iranian and Israeli communities, featured songs in Hebrew, Farsi and English, and was an opportunity to harness the power of music to connect people across cultures.

Earlier this month, he noted, Israel partnered with the Department to convene a panel discussion on World Autism Awareness Day featuring the General Director of the Israeli National Autism Association and an Israeli journalist who was the mother of an autistic child. In January, the Department had hosted the eighth annual International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. He strongly supported the work of the United Nations Holocaust Outreach Programme, which hosted a series of films and exhibits at Headquarters and a symposium on Holocaust history and education. He was confident the programme would continue to receive enough resources to expand its scope of activities.

DMITRY POLADENKO (Belarus) recognized the work of the Department in thematic areas, including peace and security and sustainable development. His delegation was proud of the initiatives undertaken by institutions of higher learning in his nation to translate the United Nations materials into Russian. He shared the Secretary-General's views, as expressed in his reports, particularly about parity among official languages and the need to communicate messages through both existing and innovative media.

Although it was important to adapt to new media technology, he said, traditional media was necessary for older generations and audiences in developing nations. When adapting modern technologies, the stages of social and economic development of a nation must be taken into account. He welcomed a special programme and a training course for Palestinian journalists. In closing, he said that, despite the challenging landscape facing the United Nations, "the role of the Department will only grow in the future".

AHMED MOHAMED SHARAF (Egypt), endorsing the statement of the Group of 77 and China, underscored radio's crucial role in areas lacking new technologies. He called for further attention to Arabic radio services in the Middle East. He lauded the efforts of the Information Centre in Cairo, which provided important services in the region in sensitive circumstances. To ensure that the United Nations message

reached all sectors of the public worldwide, multilingualism and language parity were essential, and he encouraged the Department to bolster efforts towards that end. He also encouraged the Department to continue efforts on the special information programme on Palestine, to inform the world about the harsh plight of Palestinians living under occupation and reveal the violations against them perpetrated by the Israeli authorities, which ran contrary to international law. He commended the Department's ongoing efforts to modernize and develop, which would make it possible to convey the Organization's message and meet its noble goals.

TALAL HAMED SAID AL-YAQOUBI (Oman) said that, without doubt, linguistic diversity enriched the work of the United Nations, where a number of diverse peoples worked in a multilateral framework. Commenting on existing and emerging ways of communication, he said the new media technologies not only allowed more open communications in a less costly manner, but they also helped the United Nations to reach new audiences, such as young people. However, the wide technology gap between developing and developed countries should be addressed.

The information divide also affected social spheres, he said. In that connection, he recognized the efforts undertaken by UNESCO to support media in developing countries. He was pleased with the Public Information Department's efforts to scale up multilingualism, but stressed the need to do more, such as issue printed materials and online content in all official languages.

JEAN DIDIER CLOVIS NGOULOU (Republic of the Congo) noted the Secretary-General's report and encouraged the Department to continue communications strategies that addressed issues concerning peace, security, human rights and development. The greater exchange of information between the Secretariat and other United Nations entities, as well as civil society, contributed greatly to implementing those key United Nations priorities. All protagonists must be part of the communicative process in order to enable the international community to tackle challenges to peace, human rights and development. Despite its limited resources, the Department should undertake further efforts to promote action by the United Nations in maintaining global peace and security. He welcomed the information campaign on the Rio+20 Conference and lauded the reorganization of the Conference's multilingual website, which enabled the public to understand sustainable development challenges.

At the same time, he regretted that the report of the Open-ended Working Group submitted last September on the delays in achieving the Millennium Development Goals had been made available in only one official language. All information materials from the Secretary-General must be translated into all six official languages. He commended the leading role of the Information Centres and said a solution must be found to ease their constraints. Their platform should be strengthened through the use of new information tools. Nevertheless, the digital divide was growing, and the lack of modern technological tools in developing countries could create an imbalance in recruitment of international Secretariat staff. All must have access to information about the United Nations. The World Bank's investment in an immense optical fibre project would ensure better Internet access in his and neighbouring countries. He thanked the Secretary-General for selecting the Brazzaville Centre to host information activities related to the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people.

HOSSEIN DEGHANI (Iran), aligning with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States and the Group of 77 developing countries and China, said that the digital divide remained a stumbling block to many developing countries wishing to take full advantage of the unfolding cyber revolution. It was regrettable that certain developed countries, by taking advantage of their monopoly of modern communication technology, were continuously trying to distort facts and news and engineer events and developments, especially those relating to developing countries. Certain Western countries had imposed a ban on the broadcast of more than 20 Iranian satellite television and radio channels. Iran strongly condemned the ban and considered it a clear violation of international law and regulations, in blatant contravention of the claims about defending freedom of speech and free flow of information. That was also a human rights violation, as it trampled people's right to hear all sides of stories.

He said his delegation continued to note the Public Information Department's role in propagating the

culture of dialogue among civilizations. The Information Centres in developing countries helped narrow the technological gap, and, in that regard, he called for close consultation and better coordination between the Centres and the host countries. Iran also supported “the emergence of a more linguistically equal world”, in which information was disseminated, not merely in the official languages of the United Nations, but also in “other languages widely regarded as the roots of great cultures and civilizations”, such as Persian, which was a major source of solidarity among several nations in the Gulf region.

YESSIKA COMESAÑA ( Cuba) noted the work of the Information Centres to promote the results of the Rio+20 Conference and disseminate information on other important themes like disarmament, sustainable development and the question of Palestine. The Department must continue to respect the established rules and mandate for organizing events in line with the Charter and the sovereign rights of Member States. The deep and widening digital divide separating developed and developing countries would be difficult to solve in the short- and medium-term. That divide had limited the South’s access to technology needed for development. Data from the International Telecommunication Union revealed the huge disparity in Internet penetration, which was at 70 per cent in the North, but just 30 per cent in the South. Today, 793 million adults were illiterate and 139 million children were not in school. Developed countries continued to control information services, distorting facts, promoting discrimination and curtailing freedom of expression.

She said it was vital to promote more reasonable information channels, and the United Nations had a leading role to play in promoting objective information and in continuing information dissemination through traditional media like radio. She denounced the flagrant aggression committed daily by illegal United States radio and television broadcasts to Cuba. Those broadcasts sought to increase illegal immigration by Cubans, incite violence and encourage disobedience in Cuba, and perpetrate terrorist acts. Violations of State sovereignty and acts of interference were illegal. United States broadcasters were transmitting 2,000 hours of illegal programming per week to Cuba. In 2012, the United States had conducted 192 flights over water to illegally broadcast transmissions on FM-band radio, which also caused dangerous interferences in Cuban television. In the first quarter of 2013, it had carried out 86 such “aggressions”. Many of those United States broadcasters had links to known terrorists.

YEHOR PYVOVAROV ( Ukraine), associating with the European Union, highlighted the role of the Information Centres in disseminating the Organization’s message regionally and urged the Department to continue that strategy. He recognized the work of the United Nations News Centre, but asked the Department to conduct a comprehensive analysis of all means of dissemination and allocation of human resources based on the popularity of the items.

He welcomed the updated interface of the United Nations Radio website, notable among other areas of progress. He called for meetings coverage in all six languages and stressed the importance of objective reporting of flash points, such as Syria and Mali. The highest standards must be applied when using information. He also emphasized the need for the Department’s interaction with other United Nations bodies, such as the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support.

DER KOGDA ( Burkina Faso) noted the Department’s efforts to overcome the digital divide. In that connection, he hailed the Department for maintaining radio and other traditional media and for promoting multilingualism in all its products and services. He called for more steps to achieve language parity, especially on the Organization’s website. The Information Centre in Ouagadougou, which serviced the Sahel region of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad, played a vital role in raising awareness about important development issues. It continued to make efforts to provide information to large groups of people, notably on poverty eradication, food insecurity and natural disasters.

Further, he noted, the Centre had translated into local languages documents on human rights, the Charter and the work of non-governmental organizations. It had partnered with the Ministry of Defence to organize a conference with the armed forces to train them for peacekeeping operations. In other developments, a conference on the plight of Malian refugees and food security in Burkina, as well as a national contingency plan to address it were being finalized. It was essential to strengthen the Centres, and

despite their respective economic difficulties, the Governments in his region funded the Centres in Africa in order to improve their management.

ERIKA MARTINEZ ( Mexico) recognized the work of the Department's three divisions and noted its efforts in specific areas, such as peace and security and development. Yet, it must do more to achieve linguistic parity among the official languages. Her delegation welcomed the pilot project to translate press releases into Spanish. Eventually, those should be published in all six official languages.

Highlighting the crucial role of the United Nations Information Centres around the world in disseminating the Organization's messages and promote its work, she expressed concern that the ongoing restructuring of the information centre network would negatively affect the quality of services, particularly in the Latin American region. In that context, the United Nations should strengthen ties with all relevant actors, including civil society and academia.

GERARDO DÍAZ BARTOLOMÉ ( Argentina) stressed full support for the Information Centres and encouraged the Department to strengthen their staffing and equipment structure. The Centres' rationalization must be carried out on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the countries that hosted them and taking into consideration the distinctive characteristics of each region. He applauded the Centres' increased use of social networking tools to disseminate information, including in local languages. The Centre in Buenos Aires, in 2012, had carried out many activities, including panels, workshops and model United Nations.

He expressed strong support for multilingualism and commended the Department's efforts to adapt the Organization's website accordingly. He looked forward to the media asset management system, which would carry the content of videos of the Assembly's main Committees in all six official languages. He lauded the Department's expanded outreach through the use of social media, but warned that such tools should not replace the United Nations website or be seen as a solution to the website's quest for linguistic disparity. Welcoming the expansion last year of the website in Spanish, he said it had received the second highest number of visits in 2012, or 17 per cent, versus 62 per cent on the English site. Still, much less content was available on the Spanish-language website than the English site, and he urged the Department to meet the public's demand.

In that connection, he was very concerned that the press releases continued to be published only in two official languages. He commended the pilot project to issue them in Spanish, as a first step to making them available in all official languages. He called for prompt implementation within existing resources, starting with the publication of press releases in all the official languages at regular intervals and during predetermined timeframes. During the initial stage, languages could be rotated. Alternatively, the editorial criteria, length and frequency of existing press releases could be modified to make room for new teams to write press releases in the other official languages.

QIN FAN ( China) said that the United Nations account at Sinablog now had more than 3.5 million followers, enabling the Organization's agenda to get more attention and discussion in her country. Proposing ways to improve the Department's work, she pointed first to the need to develop the level of services in all "working" languages in a balanced manner. According to the Secretary-General's report, the page views of the Chinese, Arabic and Russian languages combined accounted for only 13 per cent of the total. Given the number of countries and people using those languages, the proportion was obviously too low. The number of online video programmes in the Chinese language was also relatively small, and there should be more live coverage and webcasts in Chinese.

The second proposal, she said, was to emphasize the importance of information access for developing countries. Use of new information and communications technologies, such as the Internet and social media, had opened up new channels to promote the United Nations' work to a larger audience. But, in many developing countries, the majority of people still relied on traditional media, such as radio, television and printed publications. The third imperative was to stay committed to providing accurate, impartial and objective information. The voices of developing countries were often ignored or muted owing to a lack of

effective means and channels of news reporting. The United Nations should advocate for the establishment of a more balanced and fairer order in news communication and encourage the news media to observe professional ethics and provide objective and balanced information.

MARIA ZAKHAROVA ( Russian Federation) noted with satisfaction the Department's efforts to promote a strategic approach to communications, enhancing the role of new media while maintaining traditional ones. It should set priorities, optimize its work within existing resources and closely cooperate with the business community, civil society and other parts of the United Nations system. Multilingualism must remain a priority. She noted the excellent work of the United Nations website in the six official languages, as well as the more comprehensive website portal. Efforts to ensure the availability of web resources to people with disabilities had been reasonable and timely, and should be available on a regular basis.

She noted that information materials provided by the United Nations Russian news service were an essential part of the daily news feed for many in the Russian Federation, and she credited the Information Centre in Moscow for distributing that information. She hoped the Department's efforts to improve the United Nations live and on-demand broadcasting would continue. She saluted the creation of Twitter and Facebook accounts in Russian and stressed the need to listen attentively to the demands of young audiences. Efforts by United Nations Radio's Russian service to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the daily 15-minute radio programmes were also welcome. The transition to multimedia tools must not harm that daily programme. Uninterrupted, quality United Nations Radio broadcasting must be maintained during the transition to new hardware and software.

She regretted the continuing attempts to rewrite and falsify the history of the Second World War in a way that presented the Nazis as ideological fighters and members of national liberation movements. She trusted that heinous cases of glorification of Nazism and neo-Nazism would not be tolerated. In that connection, she welcomed the Department's efforts to combat intolerance and xenophobia. Several major Russian universities supported the "Academic Impact", she noted, adding that her country was also an active participant in the Model United Nations conferences. She lauded the work of the United Nations Information Centre in Moscow to promote United Nations themes, translate important global reports into Russian and make them available to people with disabilities. The Moscow Centre's most meaningful initiatives should be better reflected in the Department's reports.

MANJEEV SINGH PURI ( India) commended the Department's Outreach Division for its consistent effort to expand partnership with the global academic community, through its Academic Impact Initiative. He was pleased to see a number of Indian universities join the Initiative, whose members had grown to 850 institutions in less than three years. As a representative of a country with the largest number of children, he welcomed the appointment of the Secretary-General's Envoy for Youth, under the Outreach Division. He also emphasized the close partnership between Member States and the Department, with each supplementing the role of the other.

He reiterated the need for the Department to keep in mind both the inter- and intra-State digital divide, and called for the use of the widest possible spectrum of media channels, including traditional and new media. The United Nations Information Centres were the real interface between the Organization and people at the grass roots, given their ability to interact with local communities in their own languages. He commended the work of the Centre in New Delhi for producing its newsletter in the Indian languages and collaborating with local non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and cultural centres in organizing its "Peace to Non-Violence" campaign.

"Disseminating accurate, impartial and timely information on the United Nations work is one of the important tasks of the Department," he said. The summaries of United Nations meetings issued by the Department were critical sources of information for the world at large and for Member States. It was necessary that the information be "factual, not judgemental", he said, adding that "[Department of Public Information] officers are not journalists, but information officers". For example, it should not be called a "failure" when the Security Council did not adopt a decision. However, that was often the case in the



Department's summaries of Council meetings.

ALEXANDRA TOHME ( Lebanon) said the Committee should catalyse knowledge to adequately inform the public and to stimulate lively discourse and social debate. The Committee should support the Department in transmitting the United Nations message to the world, and in that context, she welcomed the Department's outreach services. Also welcome were the Strategic Communications Division's efforts to use both traditional media and interactive social media platforms to promote peacekeeping operations, the post-2015 development agenda and other priority areas. The Information Centre in Beirut had adopted an integrated approach to public information by combining the talents of peacekeepers with those of the civil affairs team. She pointed to the launch of a television series called *The Challenge*, in which Lebanese university graduates spent a day with a peacekeeper assigned to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

She said her country had always valued traditional media platforms, and noted that local radio in Beirut had contributed to campaigns promoting sustainable development through interactive platforms. Its work had also contributed to the overall transparency and accountability of the United Nations system. Traditional journalism had evolved to include the greater participation of women and youth. She lauded the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011 to a Yemeni female journalist and women's rights activist who founded the organization Women Journalists without Chains. She commended the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine, and she expressed support for the Department's partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) towards a just, comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

ARLINE DIAZ MENDOZA ( Venezuela) welcomed the reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department's three divisions and said the Department should take into account the current reality of requiring coverage in the six official languages. It was important to overcome the information and communications technology divide between developed and developing countries, and to narrow that gap, national capacity, namely technical and human resources, must be built.

She said that some media outlets distorted facts and engaged in systematic propaganda campaigns rather than respecting State sovereignty. Media could potentially become harmful instruments. In Venezuela, freedom of expression was unrestricted, as had been demonstrated in the recent presidential election. The country had two satellites in orbit, whose data was used to help the country's economic and social development. The Government was seeking to ensure that schoolchildren learned new technologies. Information and communications technology was used to transfer knowledge and further democratize the country.

YUSSEF KANAAN, observer for the State of Palestine, commended the Department's Palestine Section for carrying out media seminars and other activities in connection with the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine. He reaffirmed the importance of the Department's continued training support for the Palestinian broadcasters and journalists. He recalled his delegation's request to the Department to carry out the activities called for in relevant Assembly resolutions, including the organization and promotion of fact-finding news missions for journalists to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and to expand the Department's collection of audio-visual materials on the question of Palestine. He hoped the Palestine Section would receive sufficient funding and staff to fully implement its mandate. The Israeli occupying forces continued to directly, systematically and deliberately target Palestinian journalists and media institutions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, to prevent them from conveying the grim reality.

He said that Israel's ongoing campaign of arrests, detentions and excessive force against Palestinian and foreign journalists covering peaceful civic demonstrations and the brutal treatment of Palestinian prisoners suppressed freedom of expression. During their aggression in Gaza in November 2012, Israeli occupying forces had killed three Palestinian journalists. A cameraman of the Palestine News Network had been shot by a rubber bullet as he was covering confrontations between the occupying forces and Palestinian protestors in the Aida refugee camp in Bethlehem. He called on the

Committee and international journalists' rights organizations to bolster efforts to protect Palestinian and foreign journalists and to demand an end to Israel's violations against them. Despite Israeli control of Palestine's communications sector, his Government was working tirelessly to build information and communications technology networks to reach people everywhere in the State of Palestine and to help them overcome the occupation's geographical, physical impediments to normal life and development.

SUZANNE BILELLO, Senior Public Information and Liaison Officer, UNESCO's New York Office, presented a brief overview of the entity's programmes relevant to the work of the Committee. She said the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity was a result of a process that had begun in 2010 at the request of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication. More than 600 journalists and media workers had been killed in the last 10 years. Those statistics highlighted the relevance of the United Nations Plan of Action and its specific goal of mobilizing the United Nations family of agencies and other stakeholders to collaborate in creating a safer environment for journalists.

She also underscored the strong partnership between UNESCO and the Department of Public Information, as evidenced by the Department's commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. On the topic of digital divide, she said that a new target had been set for female access to information and communications technology during a meeting of the International Telecommunication Union/UNESCO Broadband Commission for Digital Development. Lastly, she said that World Radio Day, 13 February, had truly been a worldwide event with UNESCO and the Department of Public Information partnering to raise awareness on the enduring power of radio in the twenty-first century and the vital role it played in many parts of the world.

FILIPPE SAVADOGO, representative of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, said that linguistic diversity was a universal value, and he had high expectations for implementation of multilingualism at the United Nations. Multilingualism's impact should determine the planet's vision. His organization's commitment to that vision not only emphasized promotion of the French language, but favoured linguistic diversity overall. Multilingualism was at the heart of peace, and an avenue for equality and democracy; it represented multilateralism and the foundation of the international community's effectiveness. The world could not claim to tackle transnational threats if the concepts developed and articulated to address them were only available in the language of the few.

He said that the "cost" of multilingualism was a more beneficial, peaceful and equitable world. It must also be part of the process of defining the post-2015 development agenda. His organization had several tools in its mandate to promote cultural and linguistic diversity, and in a few weeks, it would publish guidelines on multilingualism, offering assistance on translation and interpretation in its quest to promote expression by international officials in the United Nations official languages. His organization was fully available to work with the Department on that matter. Last September, it had set up a French press club to allow journalists to share with representatives and delegates other ways of strengthening public information.

Closing the general debate, PETER LAUNSKY-TIEFFENTHAL, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, told delegations: "Your new ideas will serve as essential building blocks for making [Department of Public Information] a better and more effective voice of your Organization, the United Nations."

Giving an overview of what had been discussed in the last two days, he cited the critical importance of multilingualism; the role played by the Information Centres; the increased use of social media; the digital divide and the impact that had on access to United Nations information; the need to balance new forms of media and technology with more traditional forms; and the need for strong evaluation methods and tools to ensure the Department's continued improvement. He noted comments made on the need for consultation with host and neighbouring countries when deciding on the possible realignment of Information Centres' network. Attention had also been drawn to operationalizing the Angola Centre.

He added that, in the current financial situation, the provision by Governments of rent- and

maintenance-free premises, exemptions on taxes and other charges, and favourable rates on utilities and other services would help to ensure the Centres' continued delivery of high-quality services and products. In view of the budgetary constraints across the Secretariat, the Department had undertaken a review of the entire network of Centres and was trying to harmonize that structure where feasible without diminishing the services provided. He assured Member States that such harmonization would be undertaken in close consultation with the host Governments and other concerned countries. As for the Luanda, Angola Centre, construction would take about a year, during which time, the Department and other United Nations entities would work closely with Angolan partners to finalize a host country agreement, assess security requirements and recruit staff.

On a strategy for press releases, he noted that several delegates reiterated their request for the Department to devise and implement a plan for issuing them in additional languages. The matter was of great importance to the Department, and, as the Organization's focal point on multilingualism, to him personally. The outcome of a pilot project with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to produce press releases in Spanish on the current Commission on Population and Development session would help determine what additional resources might be required to sustain such a project, which was a first step in exploring effective ways to further expand the Department's multilingual reach. On the impartiality and accuracy, the Department would look into press releases on Security Council meetings to which the Indian delegate had referred.

He said that multilingual approach had been firmly embedded in some programmes, citing as an example the Department's outreach last month to commemorate the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. Working with Information Centres and other United Nations offices, it had produced and disseminated an array of content — including education materials, exhibits, songs, poetry and social media posts — in the six official United Nations languages, as well as in Bahasa Indonesia, Bambara, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Turkish. Improving and expanding the United Nations social media reach in as many languages as possible was a priority, and he was encouraged to hear that Member States were starting to see social media as an integral part of the Department's work.

At the same time, he said, "social media is a resource-intensive activity, requiring staff to customize content and to monitor social media activity in real time, and to respond to an ever-growing number of postings". The Department was aware of disparities in the numbers of followers of United Nations accounts across the various languages and it was taking steps to strengthen the different language accounts by setting up shared online workspaces and sending out guidance notes so field staff always had access to the newest and most important content. That effort required additional training, and the Department was working with the Office of Human Resources Management to improve staff skills in social media.

He added, however, that numbers were not always the only way to measure success. Some accounts with smaller numbers of followers might actually be cultivating the most influential followers. The Department had been very successful using Weibo to reach Chinese-speaking audiences, and it was hoping to replicate that success in VKontakte for the Russian-speaking world.

He also placed great importance on his Department's collaborative work with civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academia and the creative community. Those partnerships played an important role in promoting the work and ideals of the United Nations to audiences that the Organization might not reach through traditional or social media platforms. He also welcomed expressions of interest from Member States in hosting future Department of Public Information/non-governmental organization conferences.

On the issue of digitizing United Nations documents, the Department felt that the most important documents — 3.7 million of them — were the first priority, he said. To date, the libraries in New York and Geneva had processed around 340,000, comprising more than 3.5 million pages. The timeline for completing the task, using current resources and methods, would be approximately 20 years. There were another 13 million official documents — background reports, working papers and the like — that should also be digitized. That might take another 60 years.

Noting that several delegations had mentioned the Department's important communications support to peace operations, he said it supported the full range of United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions. That support, he added, was not confined to assessment visits to the field by Department staff. Here, at Headquarters, staff developed communications strategies, participated in pre-deployment planning, helped to recruit and train public information staff in the field, and produced and disseminated content to the media about the missions' work and the contributions of individual troop- and police-contributing countries.

He reviewed the Department's evaluation tools, which he noted ranged from surveys to social media performance measures to global media monitoring and analysis. The Information Centres conducted surveys, as well, and found that the opinion of the United Nations among participants in the Centres' activities — students, educators, non-governmental organizations, media and members of the general public — had significantly improved after attending a briefing or activity. Going forward, it was important to the Department to equip itself with robust monitoring, risk and content management tools for both traditional and social media in order to provide quality content across platforms.

Many delegates had expressed interest in the work of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, he noted, adding that while Ahmad Alhendawi's office was part of the Public Information Department, he would be working closely with many other departments and agencies, particularly the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Concluding, he informed delegations about a new product: on the website of the Yearbook of the United Nations would be the free multilingual Yearbook Express, which would feature sections of the most recent Yearbook in all official United Nations languages.

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**For information media • not an official record**