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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)**

Summary record of the 15th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 20 October 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Abdelrahman (United Arab Emirates)

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The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

Agenda item 57: Questions relating to information
(continued)

1. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) said that the role of the Department of Public Information was crucial in combating extremism and terrorism, because the battle against those scourges was primarily a fight for minds. The abuse of media and information technology was also a concern, particularly with respect to inaccurate and even intentionally misleading reporting, which had the potential to incite violence or provide extremists with a platform for spreading dangerous ideas. The international community should take a firm stand against that threat. The Department of Public Information should continue its efforts to eliminate linguistic disparities throughout its activities, particularly regarding meeting coverage and press releases.

2. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) said that the Department should continue to highlight the ongoing exodus of forcibly displaced people, including some 500,000 Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh. The overriding priority for the United Nations and the international community should be to prevail upon the Myanmar authorities to create conditions conducive to the safe, secure, voluntary and sustainable return of the exiles to their places of origin in in Rakhine State. Although United Nations agencies remained active on the ground in Bangladesh, the attention of global media would gradually shift away from that crisis, making the Department's role even more essential.

3. The Department could be a catalyst in bringing the concept of "sustaining peace" to an audience beyond academia in clear, understandable terms and in promoting the related notion of a "culture of peace". Likewise, promoting and enhancing public understanding of United Nations peacekeeping operations should remain a priority for the Department. Enhanced advocacy would be important for the safety of United Nations peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel serving in high-risk environments.

4. The Department could also provide strategic content, especially aimed at young people, to counter violent online narratives, and should partner with the Office of Counter-Terrorism to promote implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Additionally, it could help sway global public opinion in favour of a sound and comprehensive framework for international migration and build public

understanding of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

5. Moreover, the Department could optimize its resources by highlighting compelling case stories of successful initiatives as well as of existing and emerging challenges, in particular those faced by the least developed countries. Beyond providing information, the Department should maximize its advocacy role by making the case for adherence to and implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

6. He commended the Department of Public Information and the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management for their support of the inaugural celebration of International Mother Language Day in February.

7. **Mr. Aldhabaan** (Saudi Arabia) said that his country sought to keep pace with developments in the media field, develop industry and strengthen its global competitiveness. It also sought to convey its political, cultural and economic messages to the world in order to demonstrate its genuine belief in diversity, tolerance and intercultural dialogue. The Communication and Media Center, which had recently been established at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, transmitted that message in 18 languages and oversaw a world-class digital diplomacy initiative. In 2017, the Global Center for Combating Extremist Ideology had been established to monitor, analyse and counter extremist thought.

8. The Government of Saudi Arabia used the media to instil values of justice and transparency and promote a discourse of dialogue and peace. It opposed domestic violence and promoted women's participation in media. The Government hoped that the Department of Public Information would take action against media that incited hatred, sought to undermine stability and security and spread false reports. The Government also hoped that the Department would do more to convey the true nature of suffering of the Palestinian people and expose the killing, torture and expulsions carried out by the Israeli occupation over the previous fifty years. Saudi Arabia worked with all United Nations agencies in a clear and transparent manner and thus hoped that those agencies would check the accuracy and credibility of information and prioritize official sources before issuing statements.

9. **Mr. Okwudili** (Nigeria) said that 2017 marked the 10th anniversary of General Assembly resolution [61/266](#), which called on Member States "to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world", and the 9th anniversary of the proclamation of the International year of Languages. Moreover, in 2017 the theme of International Mother Language Day, "Towards Sustainable Futures through

Multilingual Education”, had underscored the nexus between multilingualism and sustainable development.

10. His country supported other recent initiatives reflected in the Secretary-General’s report on multilingualism (A/71/757) and endorsed the idea that education and information in the mother language were essential for enhancing learning and promoting confidence and self-esteem as powerful engines of development. Multilingualism was a key component of inclusivity, which was central to the mission of the Department of Public Information. In that regard, Nigeria supported the call for United Nations documents to be immediately translated into all working languages of the Organization, despite the budgetary and staffing challenges such a commitment would present.

11. Underdevelopment constrained the reach of the Department. Many developing countries lacked robust Internet infrastructure, hindering their engagement with the activities of the United Nations. Less developed countries must not be left out as the Organization continued to digitize dissemination of its programmes and activities.

12. **Mr. Rosenblit** (Israel) said that, like earlier scientific and technical inventions, information technology also had a dark side, and could be misused as a way to falsify facts and bolster bigotry.

13. Although proud to be in the forefront of technology that improved the quality of life, Israel and the Jewish people also faced the dark side of information. As the Secretary-General had warned on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, online hate speech and false information were fuelling anti-Semitism, “in complete contrast to tolerance, the primacy of reason and universal values”. His Government welcomed the Holocaust Outreach Program of the Department of Information, which taught young people about the horrors of the Holocaust while promoting tolerance and combating hatred and anti-Semitism.

14. The same tools being used to counter anti-Semitism should be applied to the fight against online terrorism. His country commended the President of France and the Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom and Italy for their leadership role in the recent high-level event on preventing terrorists’ use of the Internet, and was heartened by parallel efforts in the private sector, including the launch by major technology companies of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism.

15. The United Nations had a moral obligation to stand against the distribution of biased and misleading

information. His country regretted the Department’s special information program on the question of Palestine, which promoted a false narrative of the relationship of the Jewish people and the State of Israel to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Such activity undermined the integrity and impartiality of the United Nations and encouraged other accounts that often moved beyond misinformation to outright lies and calls for violence. He urged the Department to consolidate its political media platforms under a single authority in order to strengthen its oversight role among all United Nations bodies and guarantee that all communications disseminated by United Nations bodies were accurate, unbiased and upheld the values of the Organization.

16. **Mrs. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that the United Nations should address the perils as well as the promise of technical advances in an age of fake news. Her country was concerned about the politicization of public information and the possible misappropriation of information and communications technology to violate human rights, interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign States and undermine the structures of democracy.

17. Access to high quality Internet was a right and also a prerequisite for enabling freedom of expression. Since most of the world’s poorest people still lacked Internet access, the Department of Public Information should increase the number of scholarships to media personnel from developing countries. At the same time, as access improved through efforts to bridge the digital divide, the Department should incorporate more local languages in its efforts, including in Asia.

18. As a troop-contributing country and a signatory to the Secretary-General’s voluntary compact to combat and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations, Sri Lanka commended the Department for its coverage of peacekeeping operations, including its initiatives on sexual exploitation and abuse. Deeply concerned by acts of violence and murder against journalists, activists and bloggers, her country welcomed the establishment of 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, and had recently passed a right to information act. It also joined in calls for the Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative for the safety of journalists.

19. **Mrs. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba) said that advances in information and communications technology had opened new spaces for managing and disseminating information but had also widened the digital divide, as vast disparities in Internet access between developed and developing countries remained.

Better infrastructure would not suffice; creating “information literacy” by enabling all users to access and manage information equally, as well as to participate in relevant decisions, was vital.

20. Her country’s success in establishing information literacy throughout society was being undermined by the economic, trade and financial blockade by the United States, now in its fifth decade. The blockade had deprived the Cuban people of invaluable technological infrastructure in such areas as health, education and biotechnology, at a cumulative cost of nearly \$69 billion. The Cuban people demanded an immediate end to the blockade and to United States radio bombardment of their country by almost 2000 hours of transmissions per week over 24 frequencies. The use of information and communication technologies should be fully compatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, above all with the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign nations and with the internationally recognized norms of civil coexistence among States.

21. The Department of Public Information played a vital role in fulfilling the mandate of the Organization. A growing number of users consulted the Department’s output in Spanish, with roughly 4.3 million unique visitors to its website in that language, or more than one quarter of the total. It should continue to provide broad, balanced, precise, timely, relevant and multilingual information that was accessible to all and respected the different realities and information contexts of its audience. New technologies should not supplant traditional information channels, which the Organization should strive to preserve.

22. Lastly, more than 50 years after the Declaration on decolonization and the occupation of Palestinian lands, the Department should continue to prioritize the eradication of colonialism and other forms of foreign occupation as well as support for the Palestinian cause.

23. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica) said that his delegation encouraged an inclusive approach to the use of traditional and modern communication media in all official languages of the United Nations. To maximize public engagement, the United Nations must demonstrate how its work provided tangible benefits. The Secretary-General’s report on questions relating to information ([A/72/258](#)) provided a clear overview of United Nations activities over the previous year, and highlighted the importance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. His delegation attached particular importance to the annual commemoration of the

International Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

24. His delegation appreciated the Department’s work in publicizing United Nations activities. As a member of the Committee on Information, Jamaica welcomed the realignment of functions within the Department that had offered opportunities to dramatically expand its outreach initiatives.

25. **Mr. Kishimori** (Japan) said that increasing awareness of the work of the United Nations, the primary objective of the Department of Public Information, should be achieved through increasing efficiency and transparency in a cost-neutral manner. The United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo publicized the work of the Organization through photography exhibitions and competitions, and also functioned as the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Japan, strengthening the Organization’s partnerships with business and the financial sector.

26. In December 2016, Japan had commemorated the 60th anniversary of its membership in the United Nations with the construction of a plaster wall on which United Nations officials and diplomats could carve messages of peace in their native languages. The Permanent Mission of Japan had also collaborated with Japanese artists living in New York to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and a Spanish-music concert co-hosted by the Ambassadors of Argentina and Japan had demonstrated the importance of multilingualism.

27. **Ms. Rodríguez Silva** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her Government valued the promotion of peacekeeping operations by the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Operations and Political Affairs. Her Government also commended the efforts of the Department, at United Nations missions, to publicize measures to combat the unacceptable sexual abuse of women and children.

28. Venezuela valued the Department’s campaigns to promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and welcomed efforts to involve youth in the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals. It encouraged the Department to continue to publicize human rights principles throughout the world.

29. Although information and communications technology and social media were valuable tools for promoting United Nations objectives, Venezuela was concerned about the digital divide and unequal access separating developed from developing States. Communications technology should serve the goals of

social justice, inclusion and solidarity among peoples, and Venezuela thus supported measures to democratize information and communications technology for the benefit of all. It also called on large media corporations and news agencies in developed countries not to use such technology to spread distorted reports of events in developing countries for the purpose of destabilizing Governments.

30. Venezuela reiterated that all six official languages should be used for United Nations presentations, publications and activities. As the work of the United Nations was strengthened when it was transmitted in all official languages, Venezuela encouraged the Department to continue developing programmes to promote multilingualism.

31. Advocating the creation of a sovereign, free and independent Palestinian State within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, Venezuela valued the joint efforts of the Departments of Public Information and Political Affairs in support of the United Nations forum marking 50 years of Israeli occupation. The Government of Venezuela called on Israel to end the military occupation of Palestinian territory and its colonial policy of building settlements on land belonging to the Palestinian State.

32. Venezuela supported the eradication of colonialism in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, and promoted the right to self-determination, particularly in Non-Self-Governing Territories and Puerto Rico. Given decolonization's importance for the Organization, Venezuela called on the Department to increase its support for the work of the Special Committee on decolonization and to provide information on United Nations decolonization processes.

33. **Mr. Belkheir** (Libya) said that media policies were more concerned with the dissemination of information than with verification and objectivity. His delegation called on the Department of Public Information to help audiences understand modern media and assess their objectivity. The Department should help formulate media ethics in light of the abuse of the media by terrorist organizations, which were trained to confuse audiences and were able to exploit satellite channels and social media for recruitment purposes.

34. When dealing with development issues, the Department should communicate directly with developing countries, setting up community discussions and workshops in those countries in order to gain a deeper understanding of their concerns. That would enable the Department to identify the gaps in its messaging, and would furthermore allow the United

Nations to address nations, not Governments. The same principle also applied to such issues as intercultural or interfaith dialogue and the elimination of violence, as well as climate change, the peaceful resolution of disputes according to international law, human rights, the rule of law and terrorism. The narrative around those issues should be derived from the societies themselves.

35. Reports of the Committee on Information revealed a dire need for cooperation to close the digital gap between developed and developing countries by means of training courses. Traditional media, such as print and audio-visual media, should not be abandoned, as they were the main source of information in most developing countries. Media centres should inform audiences about the work and publications of the United Nations. There was also a need to achieve equality among the official languages in the activities of the Department by strengthening multilingualism, providing press releases in all official languages, and increasing its Arabic output.

36. **Ms. Al-Nasr** (Qatar) said that the Department of Public Information and information networks played a pivotal role in ensuring that Information Centres were transparent, impartial, neutral and accurate when transmitting information. Equality among the six official languages would promote transparency in the work of the United Nations. While the Arabic section of the Department of Public Information had seen improvements, it needed more resources.

37. Given the need to guarantee access to documentation and historical information, it was important for United Nations documents to be digitized, as such documents could benefit Member States, researchers, and organizations. Thanks to the United Nations digitization programme, to which Qatar had donated \$5 million, the new United Nations Digital Library website had recently been launched, and 3 million important documents had been digitized.

38. Access to accurate information was important for States and individuals, because misuse of information and dissemination of false news were dangerous. Efforts should be made to thwart electronic hacking, which posed a threat to companies, institutions and States.

39. **Mr. Andrianarivelo-Razafy** (Madagascar) said that his Government fully supported any initiative to place information and communications tools at the centre of all actions undertaken by the United Nations. It was imperative that the Organization's major high-level meetings should be broadcast to a global audience of all ages and backgrounds. The exceptional support provided by the Department of Public Information for such events was commendable, as was the Assembly's adoption of a

resolution on multilingualism (A/RES/71/328). As a fundamental value, multilingualism and parity among languages must be the cornerstone of all United Nations activities relating to information and communication. His delegation encouraged the Department to pursue its efforts to ensure that information was disseminated in the six official languages of the United Nations, and that the gaps in coverage among those languages were reduced. He also commended the Coordinator for Multilingualism and her team for their exceptional work.

40. Madagascar was actively involved in promoting the use of the French language in international organizations, and had hosted the most recent Summit of Heads of State and Government of countries that use French as a common language.

41. His delegation commended the United Nations information centres' use of both traditional media and new information and communications technologies, including social networks, to maximize communication about United Nations activities. Because the digital divide still prevented many of the world's peoples from accessing that information, developing countries required greater technical assistance and support in order to use such technologies. Similarly, Madagascar, as a developing country prone to natural disasters, also encouraged cooperation between the United Nations and its Member States in order to optimize information and communication in the event of such disasters.

42. **Mr. Prasad** (India) said that while explosive growth in the volume and scale of communications and the variety of platforms used by global communities promoted a new paradigm of interconnectivity, the multiple impacts of developments in one region on others required proactivity and quick responses. The proliferation of information made verifying content credibility and authenticity more important than ever.

43. He welcomed the focus of the Department of Public Information on promoting the Sustainable Development Goals, and commended the Department's support for United Nations conferences in that regard. United Nations information centres around the world had undertaken an impressive variety of promotional activities for the Goals, and the Department's coverage of the 2016 United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) was of particular value to his Government, whose two major ongoing programmes, Housing for All and the Smart Cities Mission, were designed to meet the challenges posed by India's rapid urbanization. The short video produced by the Department showing the ratification by India of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change — a turning

point in the Agreement's entry into force — had also been timely. It had been shared widely across social media platforms, garnering thousands of views in India in record time.

44. As terrorism, the most significant security issue worldwide, could derail the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, his Government commended the Department's support of United Nations-led counterterrorism efforts, and called for further initiatives conveying terrorism's destructive impact on development. While the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations co-managed the peacekeeping website in the six official languages of the Organization, the Department should consider producing the website in the main languages of the major troop-contributing countries so as to engage more closely with them. However, he welcomed the Department's extensive support of United Nations initiatives in Africa, expressing appreciation for its focus on India-Africa relations in a recent issue of *Africa Renewal* magazine.

45. The Department's efforts to maintain an extensive presence on both traditional and social media platforms was commendable. As the young relied on social media increasingly for news, the Department's ongoing expansion of its social media presence was the right strategy. He also welcomed the Department's use of its network of information centres to communicate with local audiences in local languages, urging it to consider using languages other than the six official languages of the United Nations in both its regular and special publications. In view of the United Nations headquarters' popularity for the many Indian tourists among its thousands of visitors, he also requested the Department to consider offering guided tours in Hindi.

46. **Ms. Pucarinho** (Portugal) emphasized the importance and global dimension of Portuguese, an official language in nine countries and the Macau region of China, which was spoken by some 260 million people on four continents and expected to increase to 400 million by the middle of the twenty-first century. She urged the Department of Public Information to further expand the use of Portuguese in its work, so that United Nations communications better reflected the importance of that language in the world.

47. Portugal highly valued the work of the Portuguese Unit of the United Nations News Centre, an innovative platform which she hoped would reach a wider audience. Her Government also supported the significant work of the United Nations information centres, particularly that of the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, which operated

in 13 languages, including Portuguese, and that of the centre in Rio de Janeiro. Commending the cooperation between those centres and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau in developing content in Portuguese, she encouraged the Department to undertake further collaboration with and within the Portuguese-speaking world.

48. Reiterating Portugal's full support for broadening and enhancing the role of the information centres in their respective regions and local languages, she called for promptly and fully implementing the decision to establish such a centre in Luanda, Angola to address the needs of Portuguese-speaking African countries. More broadly, to be truly global and effective and to reach the widest possible audience, the communications strategy of the United Nations must strengthen the core value of multilingualism and make suitable use of both traditional and new means of information and communication.

49. On 1 January 2017, Secretary-General António Guterres had issued a compelling appeal for peace. First communicated in eight languages, including Portuguese, his message was subsequently translated into many others by the United Nations information centres, and disseminated via television, radio, newspapers and magazines, including online outlets, and via social media. Portuguese-language videos about commemorative days and priority United Nations themes also reached many millions. Those examples showed how widely messages could be shared when allied to an effective dissemination strategy based on a multilingual approach and well-established partnerships.

50. **Mr. Lapouge** (France) said that the United Nations should use a variety of media that were tailored to their target audiences. The digital divide must not be ignored; people who had difficulty obtaining access to the Internet must be able to receive information from the United Nations via traditional media. Moreover, to effectively reach the widest possible audience, information and communication must be fully multilingual. As noted by the Committee on Information and in General Assembly resolutions, however, there continued to be a difference between English and the five other official languages as actually used by the United Nations, particularly on the Organization's websites and social media accounts — an imbalance which must be addressed. One effective way to achieve that objective would be to define the mastery of several languages as a criterion for recruitment and promotion of United Nations staff.

51. **Mr. Nikolenko** (Ukraine) welcomed the efforts of the Department of Public Information to promote multilingualism across various online and offline platforms, including by updating the United Nations website, using new digital tools, and focusing on effective social media strategies. The United Nations News Centre and United Nations Radio were seen as reliable sources of information in Ukraine, and he encouraged their staff to continue to focus more on analysis and interviews with United Nations officials.

52. As free media were critically important for developing a democratic, pluralistic and prosperous society, his Government had consistently fostered a freer media environment. For example, it had reduced State influence in the print media by privatizing hundreds of publications, and had enacted legislation requiring the identity of media owners to be disclosed. Legislative measures had also been taken to enhance the safety of journalists and remove impediments to their work, and Ukraine's ranking in the Reporters Without Borders "World Press Freedom Index" had improved for the second year in a row.

53. However, parts of Ukraine experienced severe restrictions on media freedom, including harassment of and violence against journalists: the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and certain areas of the Donbass and Luhansk regions, which were temporarily occupied by Russia and Russian-backed armed groups. Policies deliberately aimed at intimidating and terminating the activities of independent journalists and mass media concealed systematic and massive abuses of fundamental human rights and freedoms from the international community. The international community must therefore focus on those violations and respond promptly to all attacks on media freedom. His Government specifically condemned Russia's persecution of two journalists, Mykola Semena of Crimea and Roman Sushchenko of Ukraine, and demanded that the latter be released from prison immediately.

54. The Russian authorities had strengthened control over their own State-owned media, transforming them into powerful instruments of propaganda and incitement of hatred against Ukraine. The Committee on Information and other United Nations bodies should react rapidly to all such attempts to falsify information or use it as a tool for fuelling regional conflicts, and the United Nations should identify and hold to account those who engaged in propaganda wars.

55. **Ms. Khyne** (Myanmar) said that her Government appreciated the Secretary-General's report on questions relating to information ([A/72/258](#)) and recognized the

important and commendable role of the Committee on Information in overseeing the public information policies and activities of the United Nations. Expressing appreciation for Department of Public Information initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals, she recognized the efforts made by the Department, in coordination with other United Nations entities, to produce a system-wide website for combatting sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. As a contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Myanmar supported every effort that strengthened the collaboration between the Department and the United Nations entities overseeing those operations.

56. Reliable information being vital to ensuring peace and security, rapid changes in the media landscape, inappropriate use of modern information and communications technologies, and the politicization of public information posed tremendous risks. The Committee on Information should therefore mobilize the Department of Public Information as part of its global efforts to promote accurate information.

57. The United Nations should continue using traditional media to communicate information to people in developing countries who lacked access to modern technology, and countries with advanced communications technology should share knowledge and technology with developing countries in order to bridge the digital divide. Multilingualism was also important for promoting unity, diversity and international understanding.

58. **Mr. Naouali** (Tunisia), stressing the great importance his country attached to multilingualism as promoting communication, tolerance and cultural exchange and creating the conditions for a peaceful world, said that multilingualism, especially in the sphere of media and communications, was crucial to achieving the goals of the Organization and fulfilling its mandates. Support for multilingualism should therefore continue so that decision makers and others could benefit from information and actively engage in United Nations activities, especially in the field. In that regard, the Department of Public Information had done valuable work to raise global awareness of the role and activities of the United Nations, and should also emphasize the importance of implementing the commitments made at the 2005 Tunis World Summit on the Information Society to facilitate the use of information technology, reduce the digital divide and support the efforts of developing and least-developed countries to improve their capacities. The values of multilingualism should be recognized, and everyone must redouble their efforts to

overcome divisions by promoting a culture of dialogue, understanding and openness.

59. **Mr. Bessedik** (Algeria) said that his delegation agreed fully that in a time of viral misinformation and so-called fake news, effective public information was vital to ensuring peace and security and promoting human rights, justice and sustainable development. While recognizing and fully supporting the guidance provided by the Committee on Information to the Department of Public Information, Algeria reiterated its request to the Department to reflect facts in press releases accurately. It was unacceptable that discrepancies continued to appear in coverage of various United Nations meetings, particularly those of the Fourth Committee. His delegation and others had denounced that bias and requested the Department to refrain from providing misinformation, so that the voice of the United Nations could be heard clearly and effectively.

60. While Secretariat and Department representatives had made apologies, the problem of inaccurate coverage must nevertheless be addressed seriously, as it had become recurrent despite repeated requests by Member States to address it, many of which had been made at the annual regular informal meeting between Member States and the Secretariat in the framework of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, and at previous sessions of the Fourth Committee on questions relating to information. The responses to those requests had cited inadequate resources, but considering that the problem had occurred during the sixth meeting of the Fourth Committee during the current session, that would appear not to have been the case. As the Chair had stressed, inaccurate communication could lead to political problems. The Department should respect its mandate and not deviate from it.

61. Measures that should be taken by the Department of Public Information included addressing the persistent discrepancies between press releases in different languages and, not infrequently, between press releases in the same language, rather than focusing on the number of press releases or pages published. Also, Department staff responsible for writing press releases must faithfully reflect the debate proceedings and refrain from introducing their own comments.

62. Furthermore, the Department should always respect the principles guiding the work of the United Nations, including objectivity, ethics, equity, transparency, equality, non-selectivity and good faith. In that regard, his delegation reiterated its insistence that the report on the 1975 visit to Western Sahara by the

Special Committee on decolonization should be made available on the website dedicated to Non-Self-Governing Territories without further delay, as previously requested in the Special Committee. The Department and the Secretariat should formally register the aforementioned requests in order to ensure follow-up by the Department. The credibility of the United Nations system depended on action being taken.

63. Algeria fully supported the initiatives and awareness programmes undertaken by the Department to address issues such as decolonization, peacekeeping, disarmament, human rights, Palestine, sustainable development, poverty eradication, the needs of Africa and climate change. He called on the Department to heed Africa's priority needs in order to formulate effective information policies.

64. His Government would like to see the Department expand its activities, in coordination with the Fourth Committee, with a special focus on implementing the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (2011–2020), in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Goals of which must be achieved for all nations, people and segments of society, beginning with those furthest behind.

65. Although the process of selection and appointment of the ninth Secretary-General had received wide media coverage, still more could have been done to educate the global audience about the General Assembly's role so that the recommendation of Security Council resolution [2311 \(2016\)](#) was not seen as the end of the selection procedure. A deeper understanding of the General Assembly's role would promote the revitalization of its work. Moreover, a reinvigorated Assembly exerting its role and authority fully would contribute significantly to strengthening the United Nations system and to enhancing international governance and multilateralism.

66. The potential politicization of public information and inappropriate use of information and communications technologies to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign States was deeply concerning. While the Department's emphasis on using social media was a welcome step towards broadening the reach of the United Nations, particularly among youth, it should continue using traditional print, radio and television media, since those remained the primary means of public communication in many developing countries.

67. Stressing the importance of equitably using all the official languages of the United Nations in all activities of the Department, in the spirit of General Assembly resolution [69/324](#) on unity in diversity and international understanding, he expressed support for the efforts of the United Nations information centres to disseminate

information in local languages about the work and activities of the United Nations, and called for the centres to be strengthened. He also welcomed efforts to integrate multilingualism into all information and communications activities, including webcasting, so as to ensure transparency, accountability, ownership and sustainability of the Department's communications.

68. **Mr. Alhammedi** (United Arab Emirates) said that as multilingualism was important for spreading tolerance, peace and justice, all United Nations activities should therefore enjoy coverage in all its official languages. Among the positive outcomes of negotiations held by the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the Work of the General Assembly, in which his country had participated, was the decision to issue the United Nations Journal in all six official languages during the main part of the General Assembly. On 30 September 2017, the first-ever International Translation Day, the United Arab Emirates had unveiled an Arabic translation project that aimed to produce 5,000 educational videos, to be distributed free of charge to 50 million schoolchildren throughout the Arab world.

69. Media centres should expose and defeat efforts by terrorist and extremist groups to use modern technology and media platforms to spread hatred and recruit foreign fighters. To that end, a campaign launched by the Sawab Centre in Abu Dhabi to address the destructive impact of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) on families and societies, had focused on the positive role of women and youth.

70. The United Arab Emirates also welcomed the outreach and communications support offered by the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the Division for Palestinian Rights, to the United Nations forum, sponsored by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, marking 50 years of brutal Israeli occupation. It was important to spread awareness of the situation in the Middle East and the suffering borne by the Palestinians as a result of Israeli violations of human rights and international law.

71. **Mr. Mendoza García** (Costa Rica) expressed special interest in preparations for the seventieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to be commemorated in 2018, and in youth empowerment initiatives and the collaboration of the Department of Public Information with the Office of the Special Envoy on Youth. The ongoing Sustainable Development Goals campaign and the availability of information in the six official languages of the United Nations were also noteworthy.

72. The Department's cooperation with other departments, especially with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs, as well as its involvement in various United Nations activities, were vitally important and should continue. That cooperation raised awareness of and provided support for issues such as disarmament, combatting terrorism, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promoting justice and international law, drug control, crime prevention, the question of Palestine and respect for and promotion of human rights.

73. He welcomed the Department's innovations with such mobile phone applications as the "UN News Reader", as well as the launch of new multilingual websites. As multilingualism was a recognized core value of the United Nations, it was particularly important for all United Nations communications to be multilingual. While the most relevant meetings could continue to be transmitted via webcast in all the official United Nations languages, it would also be exceedingly useful for the Organization's news and archives to be accessible in all the official languages. It was quite unfortunate that the rollout of daily press releases in Spanish was still pending. His delegation continued to strongly support the initiatives that had been taken to foster greater balance in the use of the six official languages, however much remained to be done to achieve linguistic parity among them. The Department must provide equal coverage of all summits, international conferences and high-level meetings mandated by the General Assembly.

74. Despite the educational and socioeconomic disadvantages that so many young people faced worldwide, they had also advanced the furthest along a trajectory that was fundamental in effecting real change. Enhancing the ability of youth to generate content was therefore key to creating opportunities for social, economic, environmental, political and cultural participation. That was why Costa Rica had worked on implementing initiatives to promote youth inclusion, such as its national programme on mobile technologies for education, aimed at coordinating efforts and innovating classroom learning processes by providing teacher training technologies and guidance for educational communities. Education, the most valuable investment for personal and societal development, must be a right that Governments guaranteed so as to ensure social mobility and full access to other rights, while contributing to a culture of peace.

75. The Freedom Online Coalition, which Costa Rica had chaired in 2016, continued to protect human rights online, including freedom of expression and the right to privacy. His delegation valued the work of the

Department, as it fostered better understanding through its widely-disseminated communications — which should be in as many languages as possible — on the daily work of the United Nations.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

76. **Mr. Rosenblit** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was astonishing that the representative of Saudi Arabia would resort to disinformation, falsification and incitement, and that he should stop doing so. He would also do well to refrain from charging others with killings and torture. The representative of Saudi Arabia, and indeed all representatives, should focus on the region's real problems, such as the destructive policy of Iran and its crimes in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and elsewhere, instead of continuing to spread outright lies.

77. **Ms. Khyne** (Myanmar), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that her Government was committed to a sustainable solution for peace, stability and development for all communities within the State. It would implement the commitments it had made until progress and success were achieved. Rather than rebutting criticism and allegations, her Government would show its intentions through its actions. On 17 October 2017, the Committee of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine State had been established, and was chaired by the State Counsellor. The Committee would work to provide humanitarian aid in an effective manner while coordinating resettlement, rehabilitation and development efforts, and working towards lasting peace. The business community in Myanmar had donated the local-currency equivalent of more than \$13 million to the Committee. Moreover, the authorities of Myanmar and Bangladesh were working to allow the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons on the basis of the 1993 agreement between the two countries.

78. Her country considered its relations with the United Nations important, and would continue to nurture that relationship. The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs had visited Myanmar from 13 to 17 October 2017. He had had the opportunity to visit Rakhine State and had seen the situation on the ground first-hand. Her Government had also extended an invitation to the Secretary-General and looked forward to welcoming him in the near future.

79. Just as no one could fully understand the situation of Myanmar the way its people did, no one could desire peace and development for Myanmar more than its people. With the development of modern information

and communications technologies, it was necessary to be aware of harmful efforts to spread misinformation and the potential for public information to be politicized, which posed great dangers to humanity. Her Government highly valued the important role of the Department of Public Information which, as a responsible messenger of the United Nations, was to provide accurate, dependable, reliable and impartial information. Myanmar remained committed to working with Bangladesh in a spirit of good-neighbourliness and to working with all regional and international partners to address the challenges that remained.

80. **Mr. Aldhabaan** (Saudi Arabia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of the Israeli occupation should turn his attention to what the whole world could see. Everyone could see the brutal daily aggression directed against the Palestinians. His delegation had called on the Department of Public Information to highlight that aggression, and he called on the representative of Israel to learn about what his country was doing to the Palestinian people by watching the media, from which he seemed totally isolated.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.