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Summary record of the 9th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 17 October 2019, at 10 a.m.

<i>Chair:</i>	Mr. Ahidjo (Vice-Chair)	(Cameroon)
<i>later:</i>	Ms. Bacher (Vice-Chair)	(Austria)
<i>later:</i>	Mr. Ahidjo (Vice-Chair)	(Cameroon)
<i>later:</i>	Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Chair)	(Iraq)

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In the absence of Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq), Mr. Ahidjo (Cameroon), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 59: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued) (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

Draft resolution IV: Question of American Samoa (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

1. *Draft resolution IV was adopted.*

Draft resolution V: Question of Anguilla (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

2. *Draft resolution V was adopted.*

Draft resolution VI: Question of Bermuda (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

3. *Draft resolution VI was adopted.*

Draft resolution VII: Question of the British Virgin Islands (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

4. *Draft resolution VII was adopted.*

Draft resolution VIII: Question of the Cayman Islands (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

5. *Draft resolution VIII was adopted.*

Draft resolution IX: Question of French Polynesia (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

6. *Draft resolution IX was adopted.*

Draft resolution X: Question of Guam (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

7. *Draft resolution X was adopted.*

Draft resolution XI: Question of Montserrat (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

8. *Draft resolution XI was adopted.*

Draft resolution XII: Question of New Caledonia (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

9. *Draft resolution XII was adopted.*

Draft resolution XIII: Question of Pitcairn (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

10. *Draft resolution XIII was adopted.*

Draft resolution XIV: Question of Saint Helena (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

11. *Draft resolution XIV was adopted.*

Draft resolution XV: Question of Tokelau (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

12. *Draft resolution XV was adopted.*

Draft resolution XVI: Question of the Turks and Caicos Islands (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

13. *Draft resolution XVI was adopted.*

Draft resolution XVII: Question of the United States Virgin Islands (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

14. *Draft resolution XVII was adopted.*

Draft resolution XVIII: Dissemination of information on decolonization (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

15. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Finland, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname,

Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France, Togo.

16. *Draft resolution XVIII was adopted by 144 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions.*

17. **Ms. Viney** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation had voted against the draft resolution. The obligation it placed on the Secretariat to publicize decolonization issues represented an unwarranted drain on the scarce resources of the United Nations and was therefore unacceptable.

18. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that the draft resolution should be interpreted and implemented in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Special Committee on decolonization), which expressly recognized that the question of the Malvinas Islands was a special and particular colonial situation involving a sovereignty dispute between the United Kingdom and Argentina, as the only two parties, over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas. It had been established that the way to resolve that dispute was through the resumption of bilateral negotiations with a view to achieving, as soon as possible, a just, peaceful and lasting settlement that took into account the interests of the inhabitants of the Islands.

19. *Ms. Bacher (Austria), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

Draft resolution XIX: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/74/23 (chap. XIII))

20. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba,

Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine.

21. *Draft resolution XIX was adopted by 109 votes to 3, with 43 abstentions.*

22. **Mr. Gutiérrez Segú Berdullas** (Spain) said that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [1514 \(XV\)](#) and the Charter of the United Nations, the decolonization process must, in certain cases, follow the principle of territorial integrity, as was the case with Gibraltar. Moreover, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [2070 \(XX\)](#), [2353 \(XXII\)](#) and others, the dispute must be resolved through bilateral negotiations between Spain and the United Kingdom. Lastly, visiting missions could be dispatched only to Territories where the right to self-determination was at stake and only with General Assembly approval.

23. *Mr. Ahidjo (Cameroon), Vice-Chair, resumed the Chair.*

24. **Ms. Thompson** (United States of America) said that her delegation had voted against draft resolutions I, II, III, XVIII and XIX. Nevertheless, the United States proudly supported the right to self-determination and would continue to fully uphold Article 73 of the Charter of the United Nations.

25. Her delegation reiterated its concern that the draft resolutions placed too much weight on independence as a one-size-fits-all status option for Territories in pursuit of self-determination. As stated in the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the people of a Non-Self-Governing Territory could validly opt for free association as an alternative to independence or any other political status, including integration with the administering State, provided that status was freely determined by the people. The United Nations must therefore not seek to influence the outcome of various decolonization processes, but rather respect the free will of the people.

26. Her delegation expressed dismay at the outdated call to terminate all military activities and eliminate all military bases in Non-Self-Governing Territories contained in paragraph 14 of draft resolution XIX. The United States had a sovereign right to carry out military activities in accordance with its national security interests and it was facile to assume that such activities were harmful or incompatible with the wishes of the people.

27. With regard to draft resolution I, her delegation underscored that it was for an administering State to determine if self-governance had been achieved in one of its Territories under the terms of the Charter, and consequently whether to transmit information concerning that Territory under Article 73 *e*.

28. While her delegation had joined the consensus on draft resolution X on the question of Guam, it disagreed with the criticism in the draft resolution of a ruling of a United States federal court that had enjoined a planned plebiscite on self-determination. The federal court had found that the Guam law establishing the plebiscite violated United States constitutional guarantees against race-based restrictions on the exercise of voting rights. The United States had long supported the right to self-determination of the people of Guam but that right was to be exercised by the whole people not by just one portion of the population. In that regard, her delegation welcomed the Assembly's acknowledgement in paragraph 5 of the draft resolution that self-determination decisions should be conducted in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human

Rights, which included commitments relating to non-discrimination and universal and equal suffrage.

29. With regard to language concerning the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, her delegation stressed that the 2030 Agenda was a non-binding document which did not create or affect rights or obligations under international law, or bind States to any financial commitments. The United States recognized the 2030 Agenda as a global framework for sustainable development that could help countries to work towards peace and prosperity, and applauded its call for sharing of responsibility; all countries had a role to play in achieving and financing its vision. The United States strongly supported its emphasis on national responsibility and believed that each country must implement the 2030 Agenda in accordance with its own national policies and priorities. In paragraph 58 of the 2030 Agenda, Member States had recognized that implementation of the Agenda must take place with respect for, and without prejudice to, the independent mandates of other processes and institutions, including negotiations, and could not prejudice or serve as a precedent for decisions or actions under way in other forums. For example, it did not represent a commitment to provide new market access for goods or services; and it was not an interpretation of, and did not alter in any way, any World Trade Organization agreement or decision, including the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

30. Her delegation stressed that the statements made in the current and previous resolutions were non-binding and did not necessarily reflect international law. Any reaffirmation of prior documents contained in the resolutions applied only to those States that had affirmed them initially.

31. **Ms. Viney** (United Kingdom) said that her delegation continued to find some elements of the draft resolution unacceptable and had therefore voted against it once more. It nonetheless remained committed to modernizing its relationship with its Overseas Territories while fully taking into account the views of the people of those Territories.

32. **Ms. Henderson** (Australia) said that Australia had abstained from the draft resolution owing to the inclusion of paragraph 14 calling upon the administering Powers to terminate military activities and eliminate military bases.

33. Australia recognized the sovereign rights of nations to defend the Territories that they administered, which did not necessarily run counter to the interests of the peoples of those Territories. In fact, in many cases, it was beneficial. In the Pacific region alone, France,

Australia and New Zealand coordinated humanitarian and disaster response using forces based in New Caledonia and French Polynesia; those same forces policed against illegal fishing and transnational crime, providing further benefits to the region and its people. Her delegation reiterated its call for the unacceptable language of paragraph 14 to be removed from future resolutions. In abstaining, her delegation affirmed its objection to that paragraph but also acknowledged its support for other elements of the draft resolution, as well as for the right of peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination.

34. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that visiting missions could be sent only to Territories to which the right to self-determination applied, meaning Territories where there was no dispute over sovereignty. That requirement was fully in line with General Assembly resolution 850 (IX), which had also established the requirement that any visiting mission must be approved by the General Assembly. It was also in line with the doctrine of the Special Committee, as evidenced in its regional seminars and declarations that visiting missions must be sent on a case-by-case basis and carried out in compliance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

Agenda item 54: Questions relating to information
(continued) (A/74/21 and A/74/283)

35. **Mr. Nikolenko** (Ukraine) speaking as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of its forty-first session (A/74/21), during which a total of 24 Member States and 5 observers had shared their perspectives on the reform efforts undertaken by the Department of Global Communications and ways to raise awareness of the work of the United Nations. Multiple speakers had expressed support for the reforms, which would put the Department in a stronger position to engage with audiences. One representative, speaking on behalf of a large group, had stressed the importance of strengthening organizational branding to create a more harmonious and coherent visual identity across the system. Member States, in their national capacities, should help to amplify the work of the Department through their own communications channels and the Department should continue its close collaboration with Member States and maintain regular briefings and exchanges. One representative had also asked the Department to measure the impact of its work to assess its effectiveness.

36. Most representatives had stressed the importance of multilingualism and language parity. In addition to promoting inclusion and transparency, multilingualism helped to promote, preserve and protect linguistic and cultural diversity. It also played a role in promoting an

international, multilateral system based on international cooperation, partnership and inclusion. Many speakers had praised the United Nations information centres, which were intended to reach people around the world in as many languages as possible, advance inclusion and empower people on the local level to address global issues. Representatives encouraged the Department to continue efforts to strengthen their technical capacity.

37. Several speakers had expressed appreciation for the Department's work in highlighting the important role of journalists and press freedom. Attacks on the media were attacks on the cornerstones of societies and targeted human rights and the fundamental freedoms that were at the heart of the Organization. Representatives had touched on the growing issue of the misuse of communications technologies to spread misinformation, disinformation and fake news, and the need for the United Nations to serve as a source of factual, unbiased, dependable information for the world. The Department played a critical role in that regard, not only to counterbalance the misinformation but also to act as a direct link between the Organization and people around the world.

38. Many representatives had expressed appreciation for the Department's efforts to raise awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in dozens of languages and using multimedia content. They had also noted with appreciation the Department's multilingual and multimedia strategic communications campaigns, which helped to highlight the work of the Organization, the commitment of Member States and the sacrifices made by peacekeepers in service to humanity. Many speakers had commended the Department on its special information programme on the question of Palestine, while some delegations had expressed the view that it offered a biased and misleading narrative of the situation in the region. A number of speakers had highlighted the Department's Remember Slavery Programme, its Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, and activities for the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda as important initiatives that helped to teach tolerance, understanding and compassion.

39. While delegations had voiced strong support for the Department's strengthening of its new and social media capacity, many had urged the Department to continue to devote resources to traditional media such as print, television and radio. Legacy media remained the predominant means of communication in many countries. In addition, the digital divide between countries persisted, and technical capacity limitations

and high costs remained barriers to accessing new media platforms for many people.

40. Several representatives had commended the Department on its activities around youth engagement and youth empowerment, voiced support for the work of the Office of the Special Envoy on Youth and expressed appreciation for the Department's organization of the first Model United Nations Youth Summit.

41. With regard to the ongoing financial constraints faced by the Organization as a whole, many representatives had noted the serious limitations that placed on the Department's ability to accomplish its mandated tasks, especially in the area of non-official languages. The Department should seek out innovative methods of resource mobilization to meet the growing communications demands faced by the Department and should scale up its partnerships with academia, private sector stakeholders and foundations.

42. Speakers had recognized the Department's ongoing efforts to foster innovation in the Department, including with digital outreach using social media zones at high-level events, the use of artificial intelligence for its ActNow chat bot to spur action on the Sustainable Development Goals, innovative partnerships such as the global Media Compact and the use of technology for technical capacity-building in information centres and offices away from Headquarters.

43. Responding to comments from Member States, the Under-Secretary-General had reiterated the Department's commitment to multilingualism, but noted that the Secretary-General's request in the 2018–2019 budget for 18 additional posts and associated non-post resources to enable the Department to expand output in all six official languages had not been approved by the General Assembly. Nonetheless, the Department continued to identify creative ways to promote and expand multilingual products and services. The Department's reform efforts were designed to create a more modern, agile, nimble global communications service that took advantage of new technologies and new ways of connecting with people. The Department had made gains in social and new media, but those gains would not be at the expense of traditional media. The Under-Secretary-General had thanked Member States for their continued guidance during the period of rapid change and reform and asked for their assistance in resource mobilization. At a time when multilateralism, the very foundation of the United Nations, was being questioned, the Organization needed to be understood. United Nations communications must be clear and they must engage audiences in ways they understood, on platforms they used and in languages they

comprehended. The Department would relentlessly pursue those goals and was relying on Member States for their support.

44. **Ms. Fleming** (Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/74/283), said that coverage of the recent General Assembly high-level period had demonstrated the efforts of the Department for Global Communications to draw on strategic advance planning and more integrated multimedia production, which had helped the Department to create multilingual content that had been distributed in real time across multiple platforms. Preliminary results were striking and included more than 2.6 million views of the Assembly's general debate on the United Nations YouTube channel. UNifeed video packages for broadcasters had been aired at least 20,000 times in September, which was double the amount from a year earlier, and the Department's social media accounts had also reported significant increases.

45. The change in the Department's name reflected a shift in the way the United Nations approached communications. Her first priority in her new role would be to lead the development of a global communications strategy for the United Nations that was audience focused and informed by core issues such as what the values of the Organization were, who it served and why it was needed more than ever before. Through storytelling and by humanizing its work, the Department aimed to make the public care about multilateralism, whether on issues such as climate action, upholding human rights, the role of United Nations peacekeeping or implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. In doing so, the Department must ensure communications were more integrated and the impact of its work must be measurable. The Evaluation and Communications Research Unit already carried out in-depth analysis to measure impact, identify gaps and help in formulating best practices and lessons learned.

46. The Department had continued to innovate, with a new look rolled out for the United Nations home page to make the website more coherent and user-friendly, thereby attracting greater user engagement. The UN News app had also been updated and a new podcast, "UNcomplicated", aimed to demystify the workings of the United Nations. The Organization's information centres played a key role in outreach and impact, and the benefits of the network's integration with resident coordinator offices and the Department's close collaboration with the United Nations Development Coordination Office were already apparent. For example, the Beirut Information Centre had partnered

with a local bank in an innovative initiative to highlight the issue of extreme poverty.

47. Noting that the Committee on Information had underlined the importance of ongoing consultations with Member States, she said that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library had partnered with the Russian Federation and Belarus in September on an exhibition showcasing the legacy of renowned diplomat Andrei Gromyko. In addition, the SDG Media Compact created in 2018 now had more than 70 active participants.

48. In September, the annual Reham al-Farra Memorial Journalism Fellowship had welcomed its latest cohort of 15 young journalists from developing countries and those with economies in transition. The programme had now trained 611 journalists from 168 countries since its inception almost 40 years earlier. In the private sector, the United Nations had paired with the Japanese company Sanrio to launch a global campaign featuring the character Hello Kitty to raise awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals. Students, educators and researchers were another critical conduit, and the United Nations Academic Impact programme now had more than 1,400 member institutions, leveraging partnerships such as the Millennium Campus Network. Moreover, the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth had deployed a series of digital initiatives in 2019 to engage and empower young people around climate action. The Department had helped design a United Nations-75 logo and the tagline "Shaping Our Future Together". Reaching people – where they are, in the languages they speak and on platforms they can access – allowed the Department of Global Communications to serve as a bridge between words and actions. At a time when misinformation and hatred were disseminated to sow bigotry, promote discrimination and undermine civil discourse, United Nations communications served as a source of reliable, fact-based information.

49. **Mr. Husni** (Sudan), noting the Under-Secretary-General's indication that the Department had significantly strengthened its information efforts, asked whether there were enough projects around the world taking into account the world's population. He also asked how the Department addressed peacebuilding and sustaining peace, specifically in the Middle East and Africa and especially with local communities. Preventive diplomacy was particularly important in those regions and it was crucial to promote a culture of peace and combat hate speech. In addition, he enquired how the Under-Secretary-General viewed the United Nations strategy and its role in counteracting the negative consequences of communications technology. He also asked about opportunities to communicate

information rapidly around the world, emphasizing the importance of United Nations goodwill ambassadors in that regard.

50. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) said that the change in the Department's name reflected the fact that information should no longer be regarded as something that was based only in New York and the role of the Department should be considered within a framework of dialogue with other actors. It was vital that the Department took its place in a global communications network, which was changing very swiftly, and increased its dialogue with Member State press officers, other United Nations bodies, civil society and the public at large. He highlighted the Department's work involving personal dialogue with mission officials, and its work to facilitate the exchange of best practices to give the Organization's work a higher profile. Lastly, there was increasing demand for Spanish content on the United Nations website and that language had for many years been the second most widely used language in searches of the website. Despite that fact, only 32 per cent of site content was available in Spanish. His delegation therefore called for measures to rectify that imbalance.

51. **Mr. Halfaoui** (Morocco) said that his delegation would like to know what measures would be taken to enable the Department of Global Communications to fulfil its mandate of ensuring multilingualism and covering an ever increasing number of events in spite of the Organization's critical financial situation, and how Member States could best support the Department in that endeavour.

52. **Mr. Wisam** (Iraq), welcoming the Department's media campaigns on sustainable development, human rights, freedom of the press and a host of other issues, said that multilingualism was a vital part of ensuring that information on United Nations activities reached the broadest possible audience. Moreover, television and other traditional media must be preserved for the sake of audiences lacking Internet access, given the widening digital divide between developed and developing countries. United Nations information centres did commendable work worldwide. It was essential to convey the Organization's objectives and values to the young.

53. The use of local languages other than the six official United Nations languages should be promoted, and efforts should be made to ensure that Secretariat documents and all media services, including the United Nations website, contained comprehensive, balanced information, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions. The Organization should also continue its

examination of media activities. He supported the new global communications strategy for the United Nations and the continued evaluation of United Nations efforts to promote the establishment of a global system and a more effective strategy capable of reaching a wider audience. Most important, it was crucial to strengthen the media's role in promoting international peace and mutual understanding, especially during post-conflict and reconstruction periods. In his own country, the media had contributed significantly to the effort to vanquish Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant by disseminating necessary information in regions enduring the repercussions of conflict.

54. *Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) took the Chair.*

55. **Ms. Fleming** (Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications) said that the promotion of peace and security through strategic communications was one of the pillars of her Department's programmes. The Department supported peacekeeping operations but also worked on the ground in countries in coordination with the United Nations system to find ways to foster peacebuilding, stability and tolerance. Sustaining peace and preventative diplomacy after conflict were essential. The Department made use of influencers to disseminate United Nations messages on a daily basis, and goodwill ambassadors travelled around the world, including to the Sudan, to point out human suffering and deliver messages of peace.

56. The dialogue begun with Member States under her predecessor would continue and the Department would seek the views of Member States as it worked towards its global communications strategy. The Department did not wish to be depicted as a New York-centric entity. An advantage of the reforms was that other in-country United Nations system agencies would be working together more closely to communicate on the ground in the languages of the country. The Department would therefore benefit much more from the content produced by the agencies, including in Spanish-speaking countries, which could be used for Spanish-language content on the Department's website. The Department was actively working to incorporate further Spanish content by drawing it from the field.

57. The financial situation was certainly a challenge. She welcomed the Moroccan offer to convene a "Friends of the Department" meeting as that would help further understanding of how the Department worked and what its needs were, which went beyond the provision of budgetary support. Some countries had expertise, while others could offer links to private-sector partnerships or technological solutions, and the Department looked forward to working with countries in that regard.

58. The Department was dedicated to multilingualism and recognized the importance of being audience-focused in its communications. If people did not receive information through digital media, they must be reached through traditional media. The Department used a mix of channels including the media but could also deliver to people directly. The raw materials that the Department produced allowed broadcasters to put them on their own platforms and news channels. United Nations information centres contributed to multilingualism and played a role in many other ways. On engaging with young people, the Office of the Envoy on Youth was doing a good job globally, but it was also important to continue such efforts through local offices.

59. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group appreciated the outreach efforts and communications campaigns undertaken by the Department to promote awareness of recently adopted milestone agreements and other issues relating to sustainable development. The Department should continue to disseminate information on climate change, migration and refugees, counter-terrorism, peacekeeping and sustaining peace, the question of Palestine and other pressing global issues. In addition, the Department should cover, on an equal basis, all summits, international conferences and high-level meetings mandated by the General Assembly.

60. The Group reaffirmed the importance of multilingualism as one of the main promoters of unity and international understanding and a contributing factor to achieving the goals of the United Nations; promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures; and improving the efficiency, performance and transparency of the Organization. The Group remained concerned at the disparity in the use of the official languages in United Nations global communications materials even as it recognized some progress on the issue. The Department should continue its efforts to narrow the current gap and prevent continued linguistic discrepancies between press releases of different United Nations meetings. The Group welcomed the work of the United Nations information centres to disseminate information about United Nations activities in the six official languages and in local languages. The Department should continue to support and strengthen the information centres, both in terms of staffing and equipment.

61. The importance of modern communications technologies currently available to the global public was undeniable, but traditional media must continue to be used given that print, radio and television broadcasts remained the main means of communication in

developing countries. In addition, care must be exercised to prevent any inappropriate use of public information and any incorrect or distorted information. In that regard, the United Nations should lead by example in adhering to the highest standards of accuracy, integrity and accountability and in complying fully with the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Efforts must also be made to prevent the use of information and communications technologies in a manner that was detrimental to any State and contravened the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the internationally recognized rules of civil coexistence among States.

62. **Mr. Suwito** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN supported the Department's efforts to create strategic and integrated communications for the United Nations system. The reforms should bring real improvements and efficiencies as the Department worked to promote global understanding and awareness of the work of the United Nations. In particular, ASEAN appreciated the Department's activities to raise global awareness of United Nations priorities through its strategic communications on sustainable development, peace and security, human rights, the question of Palestine, and the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

63. ASEAN encouraged the Department to continue its efforts to raise global awareness of United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities, and to work closely with other relevant departments to increase understanding of the new realities, successes and challenges faced by peacekeeping operations and United Nations missions on the ground. In that regard, ASEAN welcomed the promotional campaigns showcasing individual troop-contributing countries and encouraged measures to ensure that all troop- and police-contributing countries were represented. It also encouraged all relevant United Nations departments to work together through a comprehensive communications strategy to disseminate information regarding recent developments in peace and security reform efforts.

64. Although social media had become one of the most important tools for public information, not everyone had access to the Internet. The Organization must therefore maintain its use of radio, television and print media. In addition, the Department must counter the rise of misinformation by providing accurate, reliable, timely and up-to-date information. It needed to remain consistent as a responsible United Nations messenger

and must continue to promote unbiased information about the work of the Organization.

65. Representing a culturally and linguistically diverse region, ASEAN called on the Department to work with the 59 United Nations information centres not only in the six official languages but also in other languages where appropriate, with a view to reaching the widest possible audience.

66. ASEAN supported the Department's efforts to engage youth, including by creating communications strategies that were more focused on youth and the use of youth-friendly tools. It encouraged the Department to better engage youth in different regions, including Southeast Asia.

67. ASEAN welcomed the Department's efforts to forge partnerships with various stakeholders to publicize information about the United Nations. It encouraged the Department to expand its partnership with the secretariats of regional and subregional organizations, including the ASEAN secretariat, and to explore joint activities on raising public awareness about cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations.

68. **Mr. Fialho Rocha** (Cabo Verde), speaking on behalf of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, said that the Community remained committed to multilingualism and to the principle of parity among the six official languages of the United Nations, and it welcomed the fact that the Department prioritized multilingualism throughout its work. Although Portuguese was not an official or working language of the United Nations, it was spoken by almost 300 million people worldwide and was increasingly used on United Nations social media platforms. UN News in Portuguese reached the third largest of the Organization's audience, and it had been the first language unit to become a full multimedia operation in 2013. The Community appreciated the unit's work as a leading source of materials on United Nations actions to help people affected by Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in Mozambique. It also firmly supported the Department in its objective to disseminate United Nations-related information in Portuguese, as well as its use of a combination of traditional and new media platforms.

69. The Community appreciated the work of the United Nations information centres in raising awareness of the Organization's work among local populations in their own languages. In particular, it praised the information centre in Rio de Janeiro on its work and supported the full implementation of the centre in Luanda, Angola.

70. **Mr. Brabant** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, said that his delegation valued the Department's efforts to modernize its operations and increase engagement with all stakeholders including civil society and young people. The wide range of communications tools available, including traditional media, social media and other forms of outreach, called for ever-greater creativity as well as the capacity for institutions to listen, react and constantly improve. The seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations was a unique opportunity to show the world that multilateralism – with the Organization at its core – was the only way to address global challenges.

71. There was increasing interest in United Nations activities, with rising numbers of followers of the Organization's social media account and visitors to the United Nations news website. Within the European Union, 24 different languages were spoken, and the European Union therefore realized that multilingualism was not merely a fundamental United Nations value, but also a crucial tool for accountability and transparency. Multilingualism gave rise to operational challenges but was nonetheless necessary to ensure inclusion, garner support and empower action. It was also a prerequisite for a truly multilateral system. Despite the budgetary constraints, it was therefore essential to continue communicating the United Nations agenda and values using different languages and media platforms.

72. The European Union welcomed the increased focus on youth on all continents through education outreach, including through the Academic Impact initiative and the Climate Youth Action Summit. It particularly supported all activities aimed at raising awareness of and empowering youth on the Sustainable Development Goals and climate. Partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagement were crucial to address the world's problems, and his delegation encouraged the Secretariat to join forces with civil society.

73. The implementation of reforms intended to make the United Nations fit for purpose should remain a communications priority. The European Union supported implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, and stood ready to help the Department address hate speech, an area of growing concern. Lastly, the European Union remained firmly committed to freedom of expression, information and the press, which were all under increasing attack around the world. Every day, journalists were intimidated, harassed and even

murdered, and they must be protected. Free, independent and pluralistic media were essential for the consolidation and proper functioning of democracy and the rule of law.

74. **Mr. Thirarath** (Thailand) said that effective and strategic communication was instrumental to ensuring the credibility of the United Nations and reaffirming the commitment of its Member States to multilateralism. Innovation and enhanced coordination must be the impetus for ongoing reforms in the Department. It was important not to underestimate the power and reach of communication, which enabled the United Nations to connect and interact with global audiences, especially young people. Interactive dialogue was critical and the Department was encouraged to further explore innovative ways to increase the Organization's platforms for public participation. Greater coordination among United Nations bodies was paramount in that regard.

75. Multilingualism must remain a cornerstone of the Department's work to ensure that no one was left behind. His delegation therefore called on the Department to continue its efforts on multilingualism in all of its work, including the dissemination of information in local languages. However, it must ensure that speedy dissemination of information did not come at the expense of accuracy and quality. Close coordination, adequate oversight and appropriate training were crucial to avoid the spread of misinformation. Localized information was also important, and it was imperative to understand the people and their needs and interests in order to deliver the most relevant information.

76. Broad-based global support for the United Nations was not just the result of an effective Organization; it was also a prerequisite. The general public ultimately brought the Organization's aspirations to fruition. The Department should therefore use both digital and traditional means of communication to ensure the widest possible audience. In preparing activities to mark its seventy-fifth anniversary, the United Nations should capitalize on the broad array of modern communications technologies to underscore the value of multilateralism and enhance global support.

77. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) said that United Nations communications strategies must be adapted to a landscape in which information and communications technologies increasingly affected the way in which information was produced, disseminated and consumed. The Department must maximize the possibilities provided by new tools to expand its dialogue with Member States, civil society and other actors. The

digital divide between developing and developed countries must be considered and strategies must be shaped to take growing audience segmentation into account.

78. Concerning multilingualism, the Department must move away from a translation-based culture, where English was seen as the primary language, to a truly multilingual approach where the specificities of all languages were taken into account at all stages of communication. Spanish was increasingly used in searches of the United Nations website and in social media, and it had for many years been the second most widely used language in those contexts. However, only 32 per cent of the information published on the Organization's website was available in Spanish. The Department should therefore reallocate existing resources to meet the growing demand from Spanish speakers. His delegation remained concerned at the disparity in the use of the official languages on the United Nations webpage and the fact that not all content was available in all six official languages.

79. His delegation emphasized the value of daily press releases, which provided information on United Nations activities almost instantaneously and were in many cases the only way to ensure transparency, accountability and institutional memory. It was concerned that press releases continued to be available only in two of the six official languages. There was no justification for such discrimination, especially given the renewed mandate of the General Assembly to respect parity among the six official languages. His delegation was also concerned that the audio and video files of meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council and their subsidiary bodies were not available in all six official languages, and it called on the Secretariat to restore those files.

80. His delegation reiterated its support for the United Nations information centres and in particular the centre in Buenos Aires for its coverage of the Second High-level United Nations Conference on South-South Cooperation. It highlighted the work of the Spanish News Centre as the only website collecting multimedia content in Spanish. The Centre provided Spanish-language materials on the work of the United Nations as well as other content geared towards the interests of Spanish-speaking audiences.

81. **Mr. Abusrewel** (Libya), noting the impact of the media on public opinion, said that media should serve to promote international peace and security, combat such phenomena as international terrorism and raise awareness of global issues, providing accurate information in multiple languages. Rapid technological

advancement in the information and communications technology sector had led to a digital divide between States, hence the need to employ technology to reach those lacking access to means of communication. The Department of Global Communications and the Committee on Information were responsible for educating the public on United Nations activities, prioritizing accuracy, equal use of all official languages, transparency and accountability. Lastly, developing human and technological resources was essential to improving the information and communications systems in developing countries and promoting local and international practical training programmes.

82. **Mr. Alturki** (Saudi Arabia) said that media played an essential role in promoting coexistence and human rights and spreading a culture of peace, justice, liberty and mutual respect. In addition, modern media should be used to combat all forms of crime, including terrorism, given that extremist groups often used social media to foment hatred, violence and racism and stoke conflict. Saudi Arabia used its media to further the principles of moderation and justice, restricting hateful rhetoric and preventing terrorist and extremist groups from using media platforms to disseminate their ideas. To that end, his Government had established the Global Centre for Combating Extremist Ideology (Etidal) to monitor and analyse extremist thought on social media, the Internet and other platforms.

83. Saudi Arabia also used the media to promote its economic, cultural and social message and to show the international community that its people were accepting of others and open to cultural exchange. His country valued the efforts of the Department of Global Communications to foster intercultural knowledge and raise global awareness of key international issues. Saudi Arabia called on the relevant United Nations entities, and the Department in particular, to ensure that the information it disseminated was accurate and obtained from official sources, in keeping with the highest journalistic standards. Attention should also be drawn to the attacks of terrorist militias and groups and the threat they posed to international peace and security. Saudi Arabia hoped that the United Nations would do its utmost to uphold its responsibility vis à vis media outlets involved in incitement to hatred and violence.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.