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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 10th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 18 October 2019, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Bahr Aluloom ..... (Iraq)  
*later:* Mr. Pindják (Vice-Chair) ..... (Slovakia)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

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

1. **Mr. Thapa** (Nepal) said that his delegation attached great importance to the role of information in promoting transparency and accountability, both of which were essential in a multilingual and multilateral organization such as the United Nations. In the context of a rapidly changing information landscape, his delegation welcomed the reform of the Department of Global Communications, which should make it more agile and proactive. The Department played a key role in promoting the Sustainable Development Goals across its platforms. Nepal commended the Department for its efforts to harness advances in artificial intelligence to promote climate action through its “ActNow” campaign and “ActNow” bot, and for its efforts to publicize the contribution made by United Nations peacekeepers through its multilingual “Service and Sacrifice” campaign.

2. The Department’s commitment to promoting multilingualism was commendable. The United Nations information centres, which were a key instrument for communicating with populations around the world, provided services in over 100 languages, as well as in Braille. The United Nations Information Centre in Kathmandu disseminated information in Nepali and Newari. The technical and infrastructure capabilities of the information centres should be strengthened, and stronger synergies created among them. In addition, designated repositories of United Nations publications, including the central library of Tribhuvan University in Nepal, should be modernized and expanded in order to boost the impact of outreach activities.

3. The Department should continue to engage young people, including by using youth-friendly tools. Despite the growing popularity of new forms of media among young people, access to such media in the least developed countries was hindered by poor technical capacity and financial constraints. In remote areas, traditional media remained the primary source of information. The United Nations should therefore use a combination of traditional and modern means of communication.

4. Nepal commended the Department’s efforts to forge meaningful partnerships with educational institutions, non-governmental organizations and civil society, as such partnerships helped to promote the work of the United Nations at the local level. Recent examples included the provision of support by the United Nations Information Centre in Kathmandu to the first expedition

of women journalists to Mount Everest, which was intended to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals and gender equality, and the painting of the logo of the Goals on the aircraft of a Nepalese airline.

5. **Ms. Beckles** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that the work of the Department of Global Communications and the United Nations information centres was extremely important because the ability of individuals to access information instantly was often tied to the level of socioeconomic development of the State in which they lived. While modern technology and communications networks made it possible to reach wider audiences, they also presented new challenges, notably the spread of misinformation. The Department had a vital role to play in promoting the dissemination of accurate information, publicizing and building support for the work of the United Nations, and helping people to understand and participate in events of global importance.

6. CARICOM welcomed the cross-cutting reforms undertaken by the Department, which focused on strategic planning and management, strategic partnerships, resource mobilization and innovation. It supported the Department’s commitment to monitoring and evaluation, which would ensure that the qualitative and quantitative impact of its work was assessed accurately. The repositioning of the United Nations development system, including the merger of United Nations information centres with resident coordinator offices, would result in savings and increased efficiency. However, it was important to ensure that the transition did not diminish the gains made by information centres or eliminate the communication tools that had been most effective in the Caribbean region. CARICOM hoped that the merger would result in better delivery of public information services.

7. Inclusivity remained essential to ensuring that all individuals were kept fully updated and engaged in the process towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Robust efforts must be made to ensure the effective use of existing communication platforms and find innovative ways of using new and evolving media. The Department should continue to pursue creative and effective mechanisms for information-sharing, with a view to engaging young people and the most vulnerable in society.

8. CARICOM applauded the efforts of the Department to fulfil its mandate within an increasingly resource-constrained environment. Despite resource constraints, the six official languages should continue to

be used at as many United Nations events as possible and all 59 United Nations information centres should continue to support multilingualism.

9. CARICOM welcomed the initiatives organized by the Department in 2019, including the Sustainable Development Goals media zone during the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, the Indigenous media zone during the eighteenth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the “ActNow” campaign, the “People’s seat” initiative, the activities held in commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, as well as the various events held on the margins of the high-level week of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. CARICOM hoped that the Department would continue to provide support to events and conferences in spite of resource constraints.

10. CARICOM strongly supported the United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean region located in Port of Spain, which served 19 territories in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. CARICOM applauded the Centre’s efforts to widen its information network, strengthen its media relations and extend its outreach throughout the Caribbean region, including by holding workshops on the Sustainable Development Goals, supporting the UN-Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean and promoting the implementation of the “UNiTE to End Violence Against Women”, “HeForShe”, and “Free and Equal” campaigns. The information technology capacity of the Centre should be developed to enable it to increase its operational efficiency and outreach.

11. **Mr. Caballero Gennari** (Paraguay) said that multilingualism was of fundamental importance to the United Nations and allowed for a true multilateral dialogue and greater efficiency and transparency within the Organization. Spanish was the second most widely spoken language worldwide and the second most commonly used language in searches of the United Nations website. The number of page views for the multilingual United Nations News portal had been growing, with content in Spanish experiencing the largest increase (up 88 per cent since 2018). The growth in Spanish engagement represented a challenge since the United Nations needed to adapt to higher search volumes and greater interaction with Spanish-speaking audiences worldwide.

12. His delegation recognized the efforts of the Department of Global Communications to provide high-quality documents and services in the six official languages, but it remained concerned at the disparity

between the use of English and the other five. To promote genuine multilingualism, the Organization should rethink its working methods and adopt a new strategic vision that took into account the needs of a linguistically and culturally diverse world. Since the Organization’s website and social media accounts were the first points of access to the United Nations, the different language versions must have the same quantity and quality of information and must be kept up to date. Worldwide publicity campaigns must be multilingual from their conception in order to reach the widest possible audience and promote public understanding and ownership.

13. The United Nations information centres played a key role through their use of local languages and their adaptation of messages from the global level to the local context. His delegation welcomed efforts to strengthen the centres. The rationalization process of the centres should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the needs and specificities of each region.

14. Paraguay reiterated its concern at the continuing linguistic disparity in daily press releases, in which English and French continued to be prioritized over the other official languages. Press releases, as well as webcasts of meetings, should be made available in all official languages.

15. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that, although the clear increase in worldwide interest in the work of the United Nations, as shown by the rise in the number of users of its social media accounts and websites across multiple languages, was positive, it should not be forgotten that large educational and cultural gaps persisted around the world, and that many individuals did not have access to social media. Globally, some 750 million adults were illiterate. There was a long way to go to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, on quality education, and specifically target 4.6, which called for all young people and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, to achieve literacy and numeracy by 2030.

16. Cuba supported the Secretary-General’s efforts to reform the management of information and communications with a view to ensuring the rapid, strategic and integrated communication of United Nations messages to all persons in their own languages via digital and traditional media. It was important that the United Nations continue to use traditional methods of communication to reach those who were unable to use the Internet and that it work to eliminate the digital divide between developed and developing countries.

17. Daily press releases should be issued in all six official languages. Press releases continued to be issued

in French and English only, despite the fact that Spanish was the second most commonly spoken language worldwide and the second most frequently used to access United Nations websites and other products. In the reform of the Department of Global Communications, it was essential that the United Nations uphold the priorities set out by the Committee on Information, in particular multilingualism, but it should also consult with Member States and ensure that no communication tools that had been proven to be efficient were discarded. His delegation hoped that the austerity measures taken as a result of the financial challenges facing the United Nations would not have a significant impact on the Organization's ability to disseminate information.

18. Cuba supported the special information programme on the question of Palestine, which helped to provide training to Palestinian journalists.

19. The Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was coming to an end, yet over 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories remained. The Department of Global Communications and the United Nations information centres had a vital role to play by continuing to disseminate information about such Territories.

20. His Government was giving priority to digitizing Cuban society, and had included the promotion of connectivity and Internet access as a strategic part of its national development plan. However, such efforts were hindered by the illegal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the Government of the United States. The ongoing blockade was being ramped up with new unilateral and illegal sanctions against Cuba, including the implementation of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act. The blockade had caused over \$55 million in damage to the country's communications sector between April 2018 and March 2019.

21. His delegation once again rejected and condemned the aggression that the Government of the United States continued to perpetrate against his country by flooding its airwaves with illegal radio and television broadcasts which violated the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the rules of the International Telecommunications Union and international law, and were intended to undermine the constitutional order established by the Cuban people. In 2019, United States-based stations had illegally broadcast over 1,865 hours of radio and television programmes to Cuba per week, through 21 different frequencies. His Government urged the United States to put an end to that aggressive policy, which was

incompatible with the development of relations between the two Governments.

22. Cuba also rejected the decision of the United States Department of State to establish the "Cuba Internet Task Force", supposedly to promote the free and unregulated flow of information in Cuba, because such action usurped the sovereignty of Cuba and that country's power to regulate information flow and the use of mass media. Cuba also rejected the attempt to manipulate the Internet in order to conduct illegal programmes for subversive political purposes.

23. Information and communications technology (ICT) should be used for peaceful means and to promote sustainable development, but such technology was increasingly being used illegally to destabilize States. The Committee on Information had recently encouraged Member States to consider better ways to cooperate, consistent with international law, in addressing the threats posed by the use of ICT for terrorist purposes. Cuba remained committed to establishing a new, more just world information and communications order.

24. **Mr. Aung** (Myanmar) said that his delegation recognized the important role of the Department of Global Communications in disseminating information worldwide and welcomed the reforms undertaken by the Department, which would enable the United Nations to keep up with the rapidly changing information landscape. Myanmar welcomed the Department's efforts to increase its social media reach, prioritize multilingualism, reach out to educational institutions, promote the Sustainable Development Goals and invest in both digital platforms and traditional media in order to bridge the digital divide between developing and developed countries, an effort that should be supported by all stakeholders.

25. His delegation also welcomed the development by the Department of a communications strategy and website for the high-level week of the seventy-fourth session of the General Assembly. Myanmar recognized the Department's efforts to engage young people by creating youth-centred communications strategies and youth-friendly tools and by holding a Model United Nations Youth Summit. It also acknowledged the Department's work on crisis communications training and combating terrorism and sexual exploitation and abuse.

26. Highlighting the dangers of fake news, which spread intolerance, hatred and extremism, his delegation urged the Department and the United Nations information centres, which played a pivotal role in disseminating information about United Nations

activities, to remain objective and impartial and to distribute accurate and credible information.

27. In Myanmar, the mobile phone penetration rate had increased from less than 1 per cent in 2013 to 126 per cent in 2019, allowing greater access to both conventional and social media. In addition, media and press censorship had been abolished, and the Government had liberalized the telecommunications sector to attract foreign investment, create employment and promote the development of local ICT industries. To facilitate e-governance, the Government had laid over 40,000 km of Internet fibre-optic cables and was migrating to the Unicode Standard for the writing system of Myanmar.

28. **Ms. Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Syrian Arab Republic attached great importance to the establishment of a global information regime that was more just and effective, that more closely upheld the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and that served the needs and embodied the cultural and civilizational values of peoples around the world. The Department of Global Communications was responsible for ensuring that the United Nations message of peace reached all corners of the world, especially at a time when conflicts and cross-border challenges were on the rise. The media had a significant impact on public opinion and were capable of not only reporting events but also influencing or even creating them. Her delegation was concerned about certain biased media outlets that failed to respect journalistic standards, misrepresented facts to serve narrow political agendas and instigated terrorism and violence instead of promoting a culture of peace. Although it was important for information to be released in a timely manner, care should be taken to ensure that it was accurate.

29. Welcoming the publication by numerous international media outlets of reliable reports on the reality of the situation in her country, in particular with regard to the activities there by armed terrorist groups affiliated to Al-Qaida, the Syrian Arab Republic denounced the targeting of journalists by such groups, in particular the abominable actions of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Her delegation rejected the description of terrorist groups as “armed resistance”, “moderate armed resistance” or “non-State armed groups” by United Nations representatives and the authors of certain reports. As those individuals were aware, such groups were, in fact, armed terrorist groups, the most notable of which was the Nusrah Front, classified by the Security Council as a terrorist group linked to Al-Qaida.

30. The Department of Global Communications must expand its efforts regarding the question of Palestine, given the enduring suffering of the Palestinian people caused by the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories and the denial of the people’s legitimate rights, including the right to establish an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. Furthermore, the Department needed to achieve parity among the official languages of the United Nations and remedy the deficiencies of the Organization’s Arabic-language website.

31. In the process, the Department could play an important role in encouraging dialogue and building understanding among cultures and peoples. Freedom of expression was a universal right that should never be used to attack the beliefs, holy sites or heritage of others. All States should support the work of the Department to promote the message of the United Nations and tackle pressing global issues such as eliminating all forms of foreign occupation, combating terrorism and promoting sustainable development.

32. **Ms. Suzuki** (Japan) said that the vast global network of United Nations information centres was essential to ensuring that the vital work of the Department of Global Communications reached the widest possible audience. The United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo was responsible for informing the Japanese public, in their own language, about the work of the United Nations. The Centre worked with the various United Nations entities based in Japan and led efforts to strengthen private and public partnerships.

33. The Centre was also working with the Tokyo Organizing Committee of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The Department had indicated that it would use the Games as an opportunity to showcase the Sustainable Development Goals and highlight the role that sports could play in fostering development and peace. Japan greatly appreciated that initiative and would support it. The Games would also coincide with the seventy-fifth anniversary year of the United Nations. The year 2020 would therefore be a golden communications opportunity to define the Organization’s objectives, amplify its voice and inspire collective action.

34. **Mr. Baati** (Tunisia) said that his delegation welcomed the considerable efforts of the Department of Global Communications to discharge its mandate effectively and build its capacity to promote the activities, values and objectives of the United Nations. Given the potential benefits of ICT for developing economies, the Department should promote public-

private partnerships, which could help to bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries. The Department also had an important role to play in supporting freedom of the press and freedom of expression. Journalists must be given the protection they needed to carry out their duties, while maintaining their independence.

35. The United Nations information centres played a key role in raising awareness of the values and work of the Organization, while the Dag Hammarskjöld Library ensured access to publications by Member States and other stakeholders. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the United Nations Information Centre in Tunis to raise local awareness of the Organization's activities and their impact on political, economic and social life in Tunisia.

36. As the occupying Power of the Palestinian Territories continued to violate the rights of the Palestinian people and efforts to reach a settlement had stalled, the Department should continue to support the special information programme on the question of Palestine, given the legitimacy of the demand of the Palestinian people and their aspiration to establish an independent State based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. His delegation hoped that the Department would continue to offer an annual training programme for young Palestinian journalists.

37. Multilingualism was a powerful tool for building an international multilateral system based on cooperation, partnership and inclusion. The United Nations should therefore adopt an integrated multilingualism policy in which it afforded equal treatment to all its official languages. The Department of Global Communications should explore creative ways of producing content in all languages, despite the budgetary constraints facing the Organization. His delegation was pleased that the Department was increasingly working with civil society, schools and universities to promote dialogue and mutual understanding and to raise awareness among young people of contemporary challenges.

38. **Ms. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that it was important for the Department of Global Communications to continue disseminating credible, balanced and objective information, particularly at a time when multilateralism and globalism were being undermined by populism and unilateralism. Her delegation welcomed the launch of the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and the Secretary-General's op-ed article on the subject, entitled "The wildfire of hate speech".

39. Member States should amplify the work of the United Nations through their own communications channels, in collaboration with the Department, the resident coordinators, civil society and the media. The United Nations Information Centre in Colombo provided global, regional and local information in Sinhala, Tamil and English. Her delegation welcomed the Department's work with the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and its efforts to raise awareness among young people of topical issues. As a main sponsor of World Youth Skills Day, Sri Lanka thanked the Department for its support in organizing the annual event.

40. Her delegation welcomed the recent reforms aimed at making the Department more front-facing, agile and focused on strategic thinking and operational efficiency. The Department must be able to disseminate a positive narrative of the United Nations that resonated with the general public, so that people around the world felt a sense of ownership of the Organization.

41. With extremists manipulating social media and occupying democratic spaces, it was important that the Department increase its multilingual social media presence. Her delegation welcomed the Department's support for the communications efforts of other departments and entities. As a troop-contributing country, Sri Lanka recognized the importance of disseminating information on United Nations peacekeeping operations and commended the cooperation between the Department and the Department of Peace Operations in that regard.

42. Her delegation was concerned about the politicization of public information and the possible inappropriate use of ICT to violate human rights, interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign States and destabilize countries and regions. Member States and the Secretariat must work within the confines of the Charter of the United Nations and explore ways to prevent ICT from being used inappropriately.

43. Holding perpetrators to account, ensuring redress for victims and recognizing victims' rights helped to promote civic trust and strengthen the rule of law. States had a duty to prevent the reoccurrence of violations and to reform ineffective institutions. In that connection, Sri Lanka welcomed the establishment of 2 November as the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists.

44. **Mr. Strzhizhovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that the efforts to introduce reforms in the Department of Global Communications were commendable, since the United Nations must make adjustments in order remain the focus of global attention and to be able to

disseminate information rapidly in a changing world. However, the current timing of that reform was unfortunate, given the significant financial and human resources involved and the liquidity problems facing the Organization. Now was not the time for the Department to embark on projects that did not offer much added value. More than ever, its projects should be centred around the actual needs of the Organization, in keeping with its mandates. Each project should be specific in scope and implemented using the traditional resources and tools that had proven their effectiveness over the years. In that connection, the Department should continue with its tried and tested format of informal briefings and follow-up consultations, to enable delegations to share their concerns and make suggestions. His delegation hoped that the new leadership of the Department would hold such meetings more frequently in the future.

45. The Russian Federation welcomed the Department's efforts to use various media platforms to engage young people and cooperate with players in a wide range of geographic areas to promote the Sustainable Development Goals. It noted that the number of subscribers to the Organization's social media accounts was growing. However, the disparity in page views between United Nations News content in English and content in the other languages was illogical and concerning. For example, the Organization's Facebook pages in Portuguese and Swahili had three times more "likes" than the Russian-language Facebook page, even though there were far more Russian speakers in the world and the Internet penetration rate in the Russian Federation was extremely high. Those statistics indicated that the Secretariat was not devoting sufficient attention to the development of content in Russian. The mandate to ensure parity among the six official languages must be respected. New strategies should be devised to increase the page views of United Nations News in certain languages, and all technical options should be explored to ensure that meeting documentation and webcasts were available in all official languages.

46. The seventy-fifth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations would fall in 2020. As one of the founding members of the Organization, the Russian Federation attached great importance to the commemoration of that anniversary and trusted that the current liquidity situation would not have an impact on commemoration activities at Headquarters.

47. **Ms. Mills** (Jamaica) said that her delegation supported efforts to make the Department of Global Communications fit-for-purpose, agile and proactive through cross-cutting reforms that included

strengthened strategic planning and a focus on partnerships, resource mobilization and innovation. Nevertheless, the Department must continue to use both traditional and modern forms of communication to achieve its core objective of effective outreach to global audiences. Her delegation welcomed the Department's commitment to multilateralism and hoped that future reports of the Secretary-General would contain detailed information on the fulfilment of that commitment. Her delegation was also pleased that the Department was engaged in a wide range of activities that spanned the three pillars of work of the United Nations, and hoped that any measures taken in response to the liquidity crisis facing the Organization would be short-lived, so as not to compromise the Department's work. The Department's focus on engaging young people was timely and its youth outreach activities, including the Model United Nations Youth Summit, were commendable.

48. Jamaica was committed to strengthening its partnership with the Department with regard to the commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It had taken note of the efforts made to strengthen the communications capacity of the United Nations information centre network and would welcome additional information on the impact of those efforts. The range of activities carried out by individual information centres should be better conveyed throughout their respective regions, in order to foster greater appreciation for their work.

49. **Ms. Zelenko** (Ukraine) said that her delegation welcomed the reform of the Department of Global Communications. The focus on strategic planning and creative thinking and the achievement of operational efficiencies would help to build a modern department that could engage people effectively.

50. Because freedom of expression, professional journalism and independent and pluralistic media played a decisive role in democratic transformation in any country, her Government was committed to protecting freedom of expression, improving the safety of journalists and supporting free media. Her delegation was deeply concerned at the deteriorating situation in the occupied territories of Ukraine, in particular in Crimea and Donbass, where arbitrary arrests, harassment, unlawful detention and torture had become an everyday reality for journalists and others who were critical of the occupation.

51. Another challenge to media freedom and international security was the spread of misinformation, disinformation and fake news. The Department had a

critical role to play by countering those practices, something which required a global and systematic approach. The international community should work together to identify best practices and tools for addressing fake news. With respect to information security, the United Nations should identify and hold to account individuals who engaged in information wars.

52. **Mr. Duarte Lopes** (Portugal) said that, in the light of the challenges facing multilateralism, more and better information was needed. The efforts of the Department of Global Communications to become more modern and agile should be encouraged. Its use of social media and new technology, as a complement to traditional media, was enabling the United Nations to connect with young people in a meaningful way.

53. Multilingualism was a central tenet of the communications strategy of the United Nations. The dissemination of information in multiple languages increased public awareness of the Organization's activities, promoted inclusion and transparency and played a central role in ensuring that no one was left behind. Portuguese was spoken on every continent and the number of Portuguese speakers was rising. The Department should expand its use of Portuguese, building on the success of United Nations News in Portuguese. It should be recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution [64/243](#), had requested the establishment of an information centre in Luanda to address the needs of Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa.

54. Member States had a shared responsibility to work with the Department to engage the general public. They also needed to engage with young people to ensure that multilateralism remained a driving force in the future. In that connection, Portugal was committed to contributing not only to global events that it hosted, but also to initiatives such as supporting the translation into Portuguese of the Human Development Report.

55. **Mr. Ahmed** (Sudan) said that his country commended the efforts of the Department of Global Communications to update its working methods by incorporating modern tools such as social media, which had helped to drive up page views for United Nations websites, increase awareness of United Nations activities and consolidate popular support for activities related to sustainable development, climate change, sustainable peacebuilding, democracy, good governance and human rights. Those efforts had also helped the public to gain a better understanding of issues related to young people and women, the challenges and risks associated with unregulated migration and the need to combat hate speech and xenophobia.

56. The United Nations, as the embodiment of the multilateral world system, gave expression to the collective will of the world's peoples in all their cultural and linguistic variety. It was important, therefore, to scrupulously maintain and promote linguistic diversity as a means of achieving the purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, the equitable use of the six official languages fostered transparency and equality, promoted universal access and facilitated understanding of the measures taken by the Organization on behalf of people around the world. Enhancing partnerships with regional organizations in the areas of education, training and capacity-building would also assist in publicizing United Nations objectives and programmes among rural and urban populations alike. Those partnerships could also be used to promote a culture of peace and tolerance and manage political and ethnic diversity within societies.

57. The peacebuilding process in countries such as the Sudan, which had made the transition to democracy and good governance and had embarked on reconstruction, reconciliation and economic recovery programmes, required sustained media support through coordination with various United Nations entities, including the Department of Peace Operations. Such coordination would raise awareness of the gains that had been made in establishing peace, as well as the successes and challenges that faced United Nations missions and their local staff, especially in Africa.

58. Although the United Nations information centres played a constructive role in the societies which they served, more was expected of them. They should strive for accuracy and objectivity and should combat false news and rumours, as the spread of inaccurate and distorted information threatened social cohesion and had an adverse impact on nation-building processes, especially in post-conflict countries seeking stability, prosperity and sustainable development.

59. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that, at a time when the public had access to limitless information, the Department of Global Communications had a strategic role to play in communicating the values of the United Nations to the general public, raising global awareness of the Organization's work and keeping the world's attention focused on burning issues such as climate change, migration, sustainable development and terrorism.

60. The Department must uphold multilateralism at a time when global values and norms, human rights, justice and accountability were being undermined by unilateral actions. With people losing faith in multilateral institutions and the United Nations increasingly disconnected from the general public, the



Department must adopt specific measures and develop a communications strategy aimed at reinforcing the centrality and relevance of the United Nations. In addition, the Department should be alert to media campaigns intended to discredit multilateral discourse. Given the alarming rise in hate speech, xenophobia and religious intolerance, the Department must redouble its efforts to disseminate counter-narratives.

61. The Department should capitalize on the power of social media to shape public opinion. It should also develop an action plan for raising awareness across the United Nations system and among the general public of the opportunities and challenges associated with the fourth industrial revolution. The Department should devote particular attention to promoting a culture of peace, which should be at the heart of efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

62. His delegation welcomed the “Service and Sacrifice” campaign, which celebrated the contributions of troop- and police-contributing countries to peace operations, as the tremendous work done by peacekeepers had been overshadowed by the media’s disproportionate focus on isolated untoward incidents. His delegation also appreciated the Department’s support for the observation of World Autism Awareness Day. The Department should raise awareness of the challenges faced by least developed countries and promote the interests of countries graduating from that category.

63. Bangladesh was currently hosting 1.2 million forcibly displaced persons from Myanmar. The Department must raise awareness of the situation in Rakhine State, call for accountability for crimes against the Rohingya and advocate their safe, dignified and voluntary return to Myanmar.

64. Bangla, the official language of Bangladesh, was spoken by some 250 million people, making it the seventh most spoken language in the world. For that reason, his Government had proposed that Bangla become an official language of the United Nations. The Department should also disseminate news content in Bangla through social media, radio and television, and raise global awareness of the 1971 Bangladesh genocide, which had been forgotten by the rest of the world.

65. Nonetheless, his delegation welcomed the Department’s efforts to promote multilingualism, including through the observation of International Mother Language Day, as well as the good work being done by the United Nations Information Centre in Dhaka.

66. *Mr. Pindják (Slovakia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

67. **Mr. Barro** (Senegal) said that, with multilateralism under threat, the United Nations needed reliable and effective tools that would enable it to communicate clearly across all platforms and in multiple languages. Given that most people in developing countries were still unable to take advantage of rapidly evolving information and communications technologies, an effective strategy must be devised to address the digital divide between the North and the South.

68. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Department of Global Communications to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through its “Goal of the Month” initiative. As a major troop-contributing country, Senegal also welcomed the “Service and Sacrifice” campaign, which would help to raise public awareness of peacekeeping efforts, as well as the Secretary-General’s Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

69. His delegation insisted, nonetheless, on the importance of distributing United Nations documents in the six official languages in a timely manner across the relevant platforms, in the current context where fewer hard copies of documents were being distributed. To ensure that all Member States could communicate in the language of their choice, the Organization must give equitable weight to the six official languages and prioritize multilingualism. In addition, to reach the greatest number of people, the message of the United Nations must be transmitted in as many languages as possible. The United Nations information centres played a vital role by rapidly disseminating up-to-date information in multiple languages. His Government would continue to support the United Nations Information Centre in Dakar.

70. **Mr. Nayan** (Philippines) said that, in an increasingly interconnected world, access to information facilitated cooperation, empowerment and progress. However, with many shadowy groups attempting to exploit such interconnectivity in order to sow discord, the challenges facing the Department of Global Communications were greater than ever.

71. His delegation commended the Department’s commitment to championing multilingualism, as evidenced by such initiatives as the multilingual “Service and Sacrifice” campaign. It also welcomed the Sustainable Development Goals Media Compact, an innovative initiative intended to leverage the power and influence of the media to raise awareness of and inspire action around the Goals. For States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), leveraging the power of the media through ICT could

help to propel ASEAN towards a digitally enabled economy that was secure, sustainable and transformative.

72. The Philippines supported the role played by the Department as a responsible messenger of the United Nations, providing accurate, fact-based and reliable information. The Department and the Committee on Information had a vital role to play in promoting the Organization's three pillars of peace and security, development, and human rights among the international community. Member States, in partnership with key stakeholders, should harness the power of information in a responsible manner to promote peace, inclusivity and development. The central purpose of providing information was to create opportunities and, in turn, help effect transformational change and ensure that no one was left behind.

73. **Mr. Misra** (India) said that the United Nations could not achieve its purposes unless the people of the world were fully informed of its aims and activities. The Department of Global Communications was to be commended for publicizing the work of the United Nations in overcoming some of the most important challenges of the day and for bringing that work closer to the public through its outreach activities. Particularly significant were the efforts of the Department, in conjunction with the United Nations information centres, to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals; the importance of action on climate change and the progress made to date in the implementation of the Paris Agreement; and collaborative counter-terrorism efforts.

74. His delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to highlight the contributions to peacekeeping made by troop- and police-contributing countries through the "Service and Sacrifice" campaign. While the availability of information on the United Nations website on peacekeeping in all six official languages was laudable, it would be beneficial if the website could also be made available in the languages of the major troop-contributing countries.

75. As part of the extensive work done by the Department's News and Media Division and Outreach Division, the commendable Academic Impact initiative had attracted a welcome increase in membership from among South Asian institutions. The multilingual guided tours at United Nations Headquarters, recently expanded in response to their popularity, should certainly be given also in Hindi to accommodate the many Indian tourists.

76. Genuine multilingualism promoted multilateral engagement on global issues and international

understanding. Providing information in many languages, however, particularly in non-official languages, entailed a financial burden; the Department must therefore identify innovative ways of raising extrabudgetary resources, including through voluntary contributions, especially for the most widely spoken non-official languages. Nevertheless, resources for the dissemination of information in non-official languages should continue to be included in the regular budget.

77. **Mr. Naveh** (Israel) said that, with one of the highest levels of expenditure on research and development as a percentage of gross domestic product in the world, Israel had become a shining example of a nation that placed technological innovation and the sharing of information at the forefront of its national vision, in the belief that science and technology could improve the quality of life of peoples around the world. His delegation appreciated the efforts of the Department of Global Communications to disseminate information throughout the world, raise awareness of global challenges and promote understanding between peoples, including through its Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme.

78. Although information was a powerful tool for promoting transparency, dialogue and education, misinformation presented many dangers. The Organization must ensure that the content it disseminated was not misleading and that its activities did not contravene the principles set out in its Charter.

79. The Department had a responsibility to uphold the Organization's reputation for impartiality, credibility and integrity, yet its special information programme on the question of Palestine presented a one-sided view of the situation in the region. A recent exhibit on the question of Palestine, held at Headquarters, appeared to reflect the false claim that General Assembly resolution [181 \(II\)](#) contravened the Charter by denying the right to self-determination. In fact, the resolution had been adopted precisely to guarantee that right to both Jews and Palestinians, yet the Palestinians had rejected the resolution because they had not, and still did not, accept the right of the Jewish people to self-determination. Similarly, although the Department had covered the situation of Palestinian refugees extensively, it had never mentioned the plight of the 850,000 Jews from Arab countries who had become refugees as a result of the war of 1948. Instead, it portrayed the Palestinians as the only victims of the conflict and neglected to mention their role as the initiators of that war, while presenting the actions of Israel to protect its citizens from terrorist attacks as unjustified aggressions, even though the right to self-defence was enshrined in the Charter.

80. The dissemination of such misleading information contravened the Charter and was unacceptable. Information shared by the United Nations had the power to shape how States perceived and interacted with one another, and that power must not be abused. The United Nations, and the Department, must remain impartial, neutral and fair.

81. **Mr. de Souza Monteiro** (Brazil) said that the Department of Global Communications should continue to disseminate information on the ideals and activities of the United Nations in as many languages as possible, taking into account the linguistic diversity of countries and their varying degrees of digital development. The Department should continue to use a combination of traditional means of communication, including radio, television and print, and new Internet-based media. Given that Internet access remained limited in developing countries whereas radio could reach most households in those countries, traditional media should continue to receive special attention in strategic plans.

82. Multilingualism was a fundamental value of the United Nations. The Organization's global campaigns must be adapted to the local context. His delegation welcomed the Department's use of dozens of languages in its information products and encouraged it to reinforce its multilingual approach even further. Portuguese was spoken by approximately 260 million people worldwide and was the most spoken language in the southern hemisphere. The United Nations News station in Portuguese had the third-largest audience of all United Nations News stations and had established partnerships with television channels in Portuguese-speaking countries and in countries with Portuguese-speaking diasporas. Following Cyclone Idai in Mozambique, the station had been one of the first to report from the most isolated areas of the country and its broadcasts had been widely shared on social media.

83. The Department was to be commended for strengthening United Nations social media operations and launching the new integrated United Nations News platform in the six official languages, as well as Portuguese and Kiswahili. Social media engagement had risen sharply, particularly for content in Portuguese. Dedicated social media accounts for content in Portuguese and Kiswahili should be established in order to boost outreach.

84. His Government reiterated its support for the United Nations information centres and recognized the important role they played in raising awareness of and mobilizing support for the work of the Organization, using local languages to reach local populations, particularly in developing countries. It was important to

respect diversity in the provision of public information, not only through multilingualism but also by ensuring diverse content, broadcasting styles and intended audiences.

85. His Government encouraged the Department to continue to develop activities in conjunction with the academic community, non-governmental organizations and young people. It welcomed the Department's campaigns to promote such endeavours as the Paris Agreement, the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Decade for People of African Descent and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

86. **Ms. Núñez Rivas** (Uruguay) said that the work of the Department of Global Communications was more important than ever, given the need to defend multilateralism and raise awareness of the role of the United Nations in resolving global issues. The Department must provide accurate, timely and complete information. Her delegation commended the Department's awareness-raising campaigns, which covered such issues as human rights, violence against women, disarmament, climate change, sustainable development and peacekeeping.

87. Her delegation also welcomed the Department's efforts to engage and educate young people, including through such initiatives as the Model United Nations Youth Summit. Given that those aged 15 to 24 had some of the highest levels of Internet usage, the best way to reach them was through the new technologies they were accustomed to using. To democratize access to ICT and reduce the digital divide, her Government had provided all primary and secondary school students with laptops and free Internet access.

88. Uruguay welcomed the Department's adoption of innovative ICT strategies. Social media enabled direct contact with audiences, and new technologies allowed messages to be spread as rapidly and as widely as possible around the globe. Nevertheless, the United Nations should continue to use traditional media in order to reach individuals who did not have access to those new technologies.

89. Despite the Department's considerable efforts to promote multilingualism, the continued lack of parity in the use of the official languages of the United Nations was a cause for concern. The Department should continue its efforts to mainstream multilingualism in all information and communications activities in order to reach as many people as possible. The entire United Nations system also had a collective responsibility to ensure multilingualism in its day-to-day work and in

communications with the public, with a view to improving participation, efficiency and transparency.

90. Her delegation welcomed the efforts made to strengthen the United Nations information centres, which helped to give a national or regional dimension to global messages and bring the United Nations closer to local populations. Given the liquidity challenges facing the Organization, her delegation urged the Department to explore creative solutions that could help it to continue disseminating the Organization's message.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

91. **Mr. Aung** (Myanmar) said that it was frustrating that, in his statement, the representative of Bangladesh had referred to the situation in Rakhine State, something that was unrelated to the work of the Committee.

92. Nonetheless, the Government of Myanmar was working to expedite the repatriation of verified returnees and create safe and secure conditions for their return, in cooperation with Bangladesh and the United Nations. The issue must be resolved bilaterally, as Myanmar and Bangladesh had signed bilateral agreements to that end. Myanmar had also signed a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to assist in the quick and efficient resettlement and rehabilitation of returnees. In addition, Myanmar was working closely with the ASEAN secretariat and the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management regarding the repatriation of displaced persons.

93. His Government called on Bangladesh to fulfil its commitments, as set out in the bilateral agreements, so that there would be no delay in the return of verified persons under voluntary, safe and dignified conditions. Smooth and successful repatriation required genuine political will and committed efforts, as well as strict adherence to the agreements signed. Myanmar was fully committed to taking back verified returnees, in accordance with the bilateral agreements signed with Bangladesh. Thus far, a number of people had made their own arrangements to return to Myanmar of their own volition. They had been systematically registered and processed and were now living with their families in their own homes in safe and secure conditions.

94. The main obstacle to repatriation was the threat of terrorism by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), which was active in the camp in Cox's Bazar and preventing people wishing to return voluntarily to Myanmar from doing so. There was an urgent need to create a safe environment within the camp so that displaced persons could voice their desire to return to Myanmar of their own volition.

95. His Government had taken a holistic approach to finding a constructive and sustainable solution to the situation in Rakhine State and was doing its utmost to resolve the complex issues there. It sought the understanding and cooperation of the international community in that regard.

96. **Mr. Strzhizhovskiy** (Russian Federation), in response to the statement made by the representative of Ukraine, said that the representative should focus on violations of journalists' rights in her own country instead of discussing supposed violations elsewhere. The head of the human rights monitoring mission in Ukraine, Benjamin Moreau, had recently expressed concern at the number of physical attacks against journalists, bloggers and media representatives and the lack of any appropriate reaction by the Ukrainian authorities to such crimes. In 2019, the journalist Vadym Komarov had died as a result of a brutal attack, while those responsible for the 2016 murder of the journalist Pavel Sheremet had yet to be brought to justice. Ukraine was using international forums not to promote cooperation, but to attack the Russian Federation. Allegations of media persecution in Crimea were unfounded. The Russian Federation was not attacking freedom of speech and journalists. It urged all delegations to adhere strictly to the agenda item under discussion.

97. **Ms. Zelenko** (Ukraine) said that her Government strongly condemned all attacks against journalists, whose safety must be guaranteed at all times. It had taken legislative measures to improve the safety of journalists and was committed to ensuring the thorough and impartial investigation of all cases of violence and intimidation against members of the media. The President of Ukraine himself was closely following the ongoing investigations into the most brutal attacks against journalists.

98. Her Government's commitment to improving the environment for a free media was evidenced by the fact that since the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity of 2014, the country's score on the World Press Freedom Index had risen by 25 points. Although much remained to be done to ensure a safe environment for journalists in Ukraine, the protection of freedom of speech was one of the priorities of the new Government, which had recently established a council on freedom of speech and protection of journalists.

99. It was important for all delegations to remember that there were parts of the territory of Ukraine where press freedom was under attack by the occupier, which was systematically violating the right to freedom of expression. Abductions, violence and harassment against journalists by the Russian occupying authorities were an everyday reality in those territories.

*The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.*