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Questions relating to information

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/92 B](#), contains highlights of recent activities of the Department of Global Communications, focusing on the Department's global strategic communications response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation, the development and implementation of the global communications strategy for the United Nations, support for the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and updates on the reforms that have allowed the Department to pivot quickly and proactively to communicate with the world during a time of unprecedented upheaval.

* [A/75/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 113 of its resolution 74/92 B, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its forty-second session and to the Assembly at its seventy-fifth session on the activities of the Department of Global Communications and on the implementation of all recommendations and requests contained in that resolution. Accordingly, the Department submitted three reports for consideration ([A/AC.198/2020/2](#), [A/AC.198/2020/3](#) and [A/AC.198/2020/4](#)) by the Committee at its forty-second session, which was originally scheduled to be held from 27 April to 8 May 2020, but was postponed owing to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

2. The present report contains updates to the information provided in the reports submitted to the Committee on Information, including a summary of activities undertaken by the Department from 1 February to 30 June 2020 through its three subprogrammes: strategic communications services, news services and outreach and knowledge services.

3. In 2019, the Department of Global Communications began to introduce a series of reforms to become more agile, with proactive rather than reactive communications outreach and a focus on monitoring and evaluating quantitative and qualitative results to measure the impact of its work. The reforms included strengthened strategic planning and communications coordination, a greater focus on partnerships, resource mobilization and innovation, and the integration of United Nations information centres into resident coordinator offices. The reforms undertaken by the Department proved particularly important as the COVID-19 pandemic spread around the world and required a communications response that not only provided important information to save lives, but also fostered compassion and solidarity among the world's citizens and took steps to combat the tidal wave of misinformation and disinformation that accompanied the crisis.

4. The reforms are cross-cutting and position the Department to meet the communications needs of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. In a rapidly changing information landscape in which anyone can be a content creator, information is increasingly politicized, misinformation is weaponized and people are polarized, it is more important than ever that the United Nations continues to be a purveyor of reliable, unbiased information and a source of hope and inspiration.

5. As the world commemorates the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, the Department continues to prioritize multilingualism as a cornerstone of its work, from content production to campaigns and outreach, finding creative ways in a time of limited resources to help to reach as many people as possible and engage them on the United Nations agenda. Engaging young people, particularly with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals, remains a focus of those efforts. To reach global audiences, regardless of where they fall along the digital divide, the Department continues to invest in both digital platforms and traditional media.

II. Global communications strategy for the United Nations

6. The United Nations is tasked with ambitious goals that range from preventing conflict and sustaining peace to tackling the climate crisis, promoting gender equality and upholding human rights. The Organization is often sounding the alarm about the grave consequences that accompany inaction on these issues. People are often overwhelmed by the severity of the challenges facing humanity and, rather than feeling inspired to take action, they become numbed into inaction.

7. The new global communications strategy for the United Nations, the first of its kind, uses an audience-focused approach through which the Organization shares with people what the issues are, why they should care and what they can do to make a difference. In the strategy, the Organization sets out how it is changing its approach to communications. It represents a cultural shift as the Organization moves away from being a messenger of danger and disaster and positions itself also as a conveyor of hope and solutions. While the strategy primarily drives the external work of the Department, it can be applied across the Secretariat and the United Nations system to generate awareness, empathy and support for all causes pertaining to the work of the Organization.

8. The strategy includes priority themes for the Organization in 2020, suggested tactics for communicating around those themes and steps for creating strategic communications campaigns and has monitoring and evaluation built into those steps. It includes details on changes in the Department, including structural and strategic realignment to strengthen outreach efforts, expand reach and promote multilingualism, harnessing technology and data to improve how the Department communicates, as well as staff training and development to strengthen United Nations information centres and invest in the human resources of the Department.

III. Combating a pandemic of misinformation and promoting action in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

A. The Verified campaign

9. The onset of the global coronavirus pandemic was not only a health and economic challenge, but also presented an onslaught of misinformation with confusing, incorrect and downright dangerous content being spread around the world. On 21 May, the Department launched a communications response initiative for COVID-19 called Verified, designed to combat misinformation. The initiative highlights the global health crisis and the ensuing socioeconomic crisis, encouraging solidarity on the road to recovery with a focus on building back better within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. In partnership with Purpose, a leading social mobilization organization, Verified invites the global public to come together to counter misinformation by signing up to become “information volunteers” who receive a daily piece of United Nations verified content on the pandemic via email to share with their personal networks.

11. Within the first month of its launch in May, 17,000 people from more than 100 countries had signed up to become information volunteers. Verified has been mentioned in 212 articles by 199 media outlets, across 36 countries in nine languages. In late June, the Pause campaign was launched as part of the broader Verified initiative to boost engagement and change behaviour. More than 1 million social media interactions and 7 million video views were recorded as a result of the campaign.

12. United Nations information centres have been integral in supporting the Verified initiative by compiling weekly reports on local and regional perceptions of the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO), specific misinformation trends, and what actions the information centres and United Nations country teams have taken to address these issues. The reports provide feedback to the Verified initiative on the kind of information that needs to be explained or clarified. United Nations information centres have also provided translations of Verified materials in official and local languages, shared content on their social media platforms and suggested content for the initiative.

B. Coordinating crisis communications in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

13. The Department has convened and co-chaired a weekly meeting of the Crisis Communications Group of the United Nations Communications Group since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis to coordinate the communications efforts of the United Nations system. The Crisis Communications Group, consisting of all United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes and regional commissions, discussed the most pressing issues related to COVID-19; shared a daily email with the latest information on United Nations efforts related to COVID-19; developed and updated United Nations system-wide messaging; and carried out forward planning. The Department also worked with internal and external partners to promote the policy briefs of the Secretary-General globally and acted as the joint communications lead within the United Nations system-wide crisis management team.

C. Role of the United Nations information centres in confronting the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

14. The reform of the United Nations development system has helped to solidify the key role that United Nations information centres play in supporting the communications structure of United Nations country teams. During the reporting period, information centres organized more than 140 United Nations Communications Group meetings to strategize and plan joint programmes guided by national priorities. In responding to COVID-19, information centres have provided expertise and assistance to United Nations crisis management teams by preparing crisis communications strategies, situation reports and daily media monitoring, and by translating the key messages of WHO and other United Nations entities into local languages to be disseminated through both digital and traditional media.

15. For example, the United Nations information centre in Cairo collaborated with WHO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to create a citizen awareness guide on COVID-19 on social media. The information centre in Bogotá collaborated with United Nations entities to produce videos to raise awareness of the disease and the information centre in Kyiv worked with WHO, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to publish five articles on the ICTV news website in Ukraine, which has 7 million viewers monthly.

16. The United Nations Information Service in Geneva, through videos, stories and interviews, has amplified the messaging of Geneva-based United Nations entities. On World Water Day (22 March), the information centre and the United Nations Communications Group in Beirut launched the #SafeHands4Lebanon challenge on social media using videos of United Nations officials, influencers and celebrities, which generated around 287,000 engagements.

17. The focus on pandemic-related communications has led to the curtailment of many regular activities of United Nations information centres; for example, 11 Model United Nations simulations were undertaken in February to June 2020 compared with 123 in the year 2019 as a whole; the number of organized lectures fell from 1,347 in 2019 to 156 in February to June 2020; and the number of exhibitions fell from 188 in 2019 to 30 in February to June 2020.

18. At the same time, in response to the pandemic, many activities increased dramatically. The United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels and the information centre in Mexico City launched COVID-19 web portals,

with the latter generating 2.5 million pageviews in a month. Pan American Health Organization/WHO information on COVID-19 promoted on social media by the information centre in Rio de Janeiro reached 200,000 people on the first day; while the information centre in Lagos reinforced COVID-19 messaging through radio jingles in local languages broadcast to 60 million people across six Nigerian states. There were 354 placements of op-eds by the Secretary-General from February to June 2020, compared with 129 in the year 2019 as a whole.

19. United Nations information centres have enhanced their digital storytelling, with compelling and inspiring human-interest stories showcasing local heroes and United Nations front-line workers. Dozens of such stories have been published on the Department's global COVID-19 portal and on the websites of United Nations News and of the Development Coordination Office of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group.

20. Addressing the "infodemic" that has accompanied COVID-19 has been central to the work of the United Nations information centres. The information centre in Tbilisi produced two videos with the National Centre for Disease Control and Public Health and the Georgian Alliance for Safe Roads on using facemasks and gloves, while the information centre in Windhoek collaborated with the media and the Ministry of Health and Social Services in Namibia to provide information in local languages. The information centre in Pretoria, in partnership with the media company Jive Media Africa, produced posters for schools and workplaces that were also published on the coronavirus website of the Government of South Africa.

21. Examples of creative partnerships included that between the information centre in Lusaka and the mobile service provider MTN Zambia Ltd to produce posters with WHO prevention messages; and the #BeActive campaign of the information centre in Tokyo in which Japan Football Association players gave tips on exercising at home. The information centre in Buenos Aires worked with Subway, Google, Facebook and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Chequeado to amplify messages and build awareness of misinformation, while the information centre in Moscow engaged Russian opinion leaders and influencers, including renowned ice hockey player Viacheslav Fetisov, to produce videos on life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

22. The Department continued to strengthen the integration of United Nations information centres and resident coordinator offices through weekly webinars focused on the response of the United Nations to the pandemic. Reaching an average of 300 communications staff across the United Nations system, the sessions provided briefings by WHO and other United Nations entities and enabled the sharing of experiences and good practices on crisis communications. Additional webinars on the global communications strategy for the United Nations, evaluating impact, storytelling and regional issues, reached a total of 5,427 participants during the reporting period, compared with 2,231 in the year 2019 as a whole. The initiation of regional peer group meetings and a network of language coordinators further bolstered field support.

D. News and media in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

23. In February, the Department launched a dedicated web portal to provide consolidated and practical information, as well as daily updates, on the United Nations response to the pandemic (www.un.org/coronavirus). Since its launch, the portal has attracted 1.7 million unique users and has recorded 2.8 million pageviews. Available in all six official languages, the portal includes the Secretary-General's reports, statements and policy briefs, serves as a platform for the promotion of campaigns and has a dedicated section with information for Member States.

E. Promoting sustainable development in the context of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

24. In the light of the pandemic, and the multidimensional crisis that it has triggered, communications on sustainable development and climate change have been reframed. They are now geared more towards supporting the Secretary-General's call to build back better, using the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change as the frameworks for a fairer, greener and more resilient global economy.

25. The message of the Secretary-General on Earth Day (22 April), followed by his remarks at the Petersberg Climate Dialogue on 28 April, a series of policy briefs and op-eds in the *New York Times*, *O Globo*, the *Jakarta Post* and *Le Monde*, among others, were widely promoted. He highlighted thematic and regional dimensions of the pandemic, as well as impacts on vulnerable populations, and focused attention on the urgent action needed to save lives and livelihoods, addressing both the pandemic and the climate emergency.

26. The Department also promoted the launch of flagship reports by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, such as the *Financing for Sustainable Development Report* (9 April) and the *World Economic Situation and Prospects as of Mid-2020* (13 May).

27. Virtual events promoted through the Department's channels included the High-level Event on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond (28 May) and the extraordinary meeting of the Global Investors for Sustainable Development Alliance (10 June). The Department also supported the launch of the Deputy Secretary-General's Women Rise for All initiative (27 April), with the participation of the President of Ethiopia and the Prime Ministers of Barbados and Norway.

28. The International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May), World Environment Day (5 June) and World Oceans Day (8 June) provided further high-profile opportunities to highlight the importance of a healthy planet and a green recovery.

29. Multimedia content on the impact of COVID-19 on each of the Sustainable Development Goals was featured on the Sustainable Development Goals website (www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment), recording an average of more than 2.5 million monthly pageviews in 2020 across all official languages, as well as on the @GlobalGoalsUN social media account, which has more than 700,000 followers.

30. Participation in the Sustainable Development Goals Media Compact grew to more than 100 members, with a reach of more than 2 billion people across five continents. The newest members include the Shanghai Media Group, Sistema Sagres of Brazil and the *Nigerian Observer*. The focus of the monthly editorial packages shifted to highlighting relevant Sustainable Development Goals in connection with the pandemic, such as health (Goal 3) in April and inequalities (Goal 10) in May.

F. Creative community outreach and Messengers of Peace

31. All current Messengers of Peace signed a joint statement in support of the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire during the pandemic, generating 80,000 social media engagements. They also shared at least 59 posts in support of United Nations messaging on COVID-19, generating 371,000 engagements.

32. The 2020 observance of World Autism Awareness Day (2 April) highlighted the disproportionate risk that persons with autism face and the importance of ensuring

that their rights were not infringed upon during the pandemic, with social media posts about the Day generating more than 10,000 engagements. The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (6 April) was focused on the #BeActive campaign, generating 79,600 engagements.

G. United Nations Academic Impact

33. As the pandemic spread, the United Nations Academic Impact initiative quickly adapted its programme of work to digital outreach with robust multimedia content and virtual engagement for its global audience of students, educators, university administrators, researchers and innovators. During the reporting period, the initiative launched a multilingual, multimedia webinar series on the impact of COVID-19 on higher education, including what lessons could be learned and what education might look like after the pandemic.

H. Education outreach

34. On 18 May, the Department hosted a webinar entitled, “Fighting stigma, xenophobia, hate speech and racial discrimination related to COVID-19”. It was co-organized by the Civil Society Unit, the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme and the Remember Slavery Programme. Of the 400 attendees surveyed, 100 per cent indicated that the briefing had increased their understanding of how disinformation was used to encourage racism, prejudice and stigmatization of those infected with COVID-19, while 69 per cent said that they would apply what they had learned to their work or studies.

35. On 28 May, the Department hosted a webinar entitled “Inclusion in the time of COVID-19: confronting slavery’s legacy of racism together”, involving 380 participants. Organized by the Remember Slavery Programme and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent, the discussion was focused on how people of African descent have suffered disproportionately from COVID-19. Among survey respondents, 84 per cent said that the webinar had increased their understanding of how COVID-19 exacerbated racial inequalities.

I. Visitors’ services

36. Since mid-March, the visitors’ services in Geneva, Nairobi, New York and Vienna moved swiftly to refocus efforts to offer virtual and online tours and briefings. In Vienna, a series of #GlobalGoals videos shows how the United Nations has continued its work in support of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals during the crisis. In New York, virtual tours were conducted for the NYC Junior Ambassadors programme, the New York Times Summer Academy, elementary schools in Pakistan and universities, as well as for Model United Nations groups. In Geneva, the Visitors’ Service is preparing short films and virtual visits of the Palais des Nations using 360-degree filming technology, an ongoing project that was started in the context of the strategic heritage plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva; and protocol tours for visiting dignitaries have already resumed. In Nairobi, the Visitors’ Service is finalizing an exhibition on the United Nations in Africa, which will become part of the tour, with installation tentatively planned by the end of 2020.

J. Knowledge solutions

37. During the reporting period, about 600 unique articles were published in English and French on the United Nations intranet, iSeek, 40 per cent of which were related to COVID-19. Expanded access to iSeek was provided to staff working remotely, and dedicated resources pages were established on policies in response to the pandemic. A series of 15 online information sessions, iSeek Live, was launched, which attracted 50,000 viewers. Through an iSeek Live session, 1,400 staff members were introduced to Verified. As part of ongoing efforts to expand access to iSeek, 50,000 staff from UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) were added to the 40,000 Secretariat staff who already had access.

38. In response to the pandemic, the Graphic Design Unit developed a visual system for social media graphics, websites and more than 15 reports and policy briefs on COVID-19 for the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

39. The Knowledge Solutions and Design Section Web Group provided technical support for the Drupal-based web content management system (known as “UN2”), which enabled the rapid deployment of the United Nations public-facing coronavirus website (www.un.org/coronavirus) in all official languages.

K. Sales and marketing

40. United Nations Publications incorporated COVID-19 content into its e-commerce website (shop.un.org), as well as into its online platform, UN iLibrary; produced e-books accessible to persons with disabilities from all COVID-19 policy briefs; and published *From My Window: Children at Home During COVID-19*, which looks at the lives of housebound children worldwide through their own perspectives. The Sustainable Development Goal Book Club moved its story-time initiative for children online for a month, from 5 May to 2 June, to work with publishers to promote Sustainable Development Goal content during the pandemic.

L. Exhibits

41. The Exhibits Unit shifted its focus to online exhibitions in connection with United Nations international days. Six exhibitions were made available online between March and June 2020 on priority issues including sexual violence in conflict, peacekeeping and the state of the world’s oceans. These exhibitions have been viewed by 1,475 online visitors, with 3,300 engagements on social media.

M. Civil Society Unit and Non-Governmental Liaison Service

42. The first virtual briefing of the Civil Society Unit highlighted the work of nurses and health-care workers on the front line of the pandemic and was viewed by 580 individuals in 20 countries. The Department launched a call for stories highlighting civil society responses to the pandemic, and 30 stories were subsequently promoted on social media. It also launched a civil society misinformation survey in seven languages.

N. *UN Chronicle*

43. *UN Chronicle* published 17 articles on the pandemic and the United Nations response, emphasizing long-term solutions that could help to prevent future deadly outbreaks and build back better. Permanent Representatives of Member States, United Nations officials and other experts contributed written content on how the Organization is using technology to slow the spread of the virus while continuing to fulfil its core functions and mandates; protecting the environment and biodiversity as a means of preventing the emergence of deadly diseases; and the critical role of women in saving lives and meeting recovery needs. The website garnered more than 1.5 million pageviews between June 2019 and June 2020.

O. **Dag Hammarskjöld Library**

44. Responding to the pandemic, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library enabled remote access to its electronic resource portfolio for staff and delegates at United Nations Headquarters. Through the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisition Consortium, the Library guaranteed remote access to subscribed resources for United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes. The Library also prepared and released an online set of frequently asked questions in English, French and Spanish, collating and maintaining up-to-date information on the actions of the United Nations.

IV. **Multilingualism**

A. **The role of United Nations information centres in multilingualism**

45. The network of 59 United Nations information centres operates in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish daily, as well as in 106 additional local languages.¹ The information centres in Dakar, Dar es Salaam, Lagos, Lusaka, Pretoria, Windhoek and Yaoundé, for example, translated into local languages and disseminated messages from the Secretary-General and videos and interviews with United Nations experts through television partners, community radio networks and United Nations radio programmes, potentially reaching over 400 million people.

46. The information centre in New Delhi coordinated the posting of Hindi sign language videos on COVID-19 on traditional and social media outlets. The information centre in Dakar facilitated the distribution of a pan-African outreach campaign using videos that combat misinformation on COVID-19 in local languages through national and regional television networks in 22 francophone African countries. To promote the United Nations system in Vienna, the United Nations Information Service in Vienna, in partnership with the Conference Management Service and the Information Technology Service of the United Nations Office at

¹ Afrikaans, Amharic, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Bahasa Indonesian, Bafut, Bambara, Bangla/Bengali, Bangwa, Basaa, Belarusian, Bemba, Burmese, Catalan, Chechen, Creole, Czech, Danish, Dioula, Dutch, Euskera, Ewondo, Faroese, Filipino, Finnish, Frisian (Frysk), Fulfulde, Galician, Georgian, German, Greek, Guarani, Gujarati, Gulmacema, Icelandic, Ila, Hausa, Hindi, Hungarian, Igbo, Italian, Japanese, Kaonde, Kiswahili, Kituba, Lala, Lamba, Lenje, Lingala, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, Malagasy, Mambwe, Maori, Marathi, Mari, Mbunda, Moore, Namwanga, Ndebele, Ngoni, Nkoya, Northern Sami, Norwegian, Nsenga, Nyanja, Persian, Pidgin English, Polish, Portuguese, Quechua, Romanian, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Shona, Shupamum, Sinhala, Siswati, Slovak, Slovenian, Soli, Swedish, Tagalog, Tamazigh, Tamil, Tatar, Telugu, Tigrinya, Tonga, Tsonga, Tumbuka, Turkish, Turkmen, Twi, Ukrainian, Urdu, Venda, Vietnamese, Wolof, Xhosa, Yakut, Yoruba and Zulu.

Vienna and the United Nations Communications Group in Vienna, launched a multilingual web portal (www.unvienna.org).

B. Multimedia and multilingual news and features

47. During the reporting period, United Nations News websites experienced a surge in users of over 437 per cent compared with the same period in 2019. In early February, United Nations News created a composite coronavirus page for global audiences in nine languages.

48. United Nations News continued to cover virtual sessions of the Security Council, as well as key sessions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, along with amplifying the commitment of the United Nations to human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. By drawing on facts and statistics provided by WHO and reaching out to resident coordinator offices to cover all facets of the pandemic, United Nations News attracted substantial new audiences (see figures I and II) seeking authoritative information and engaging storytelling. United Nations News produced explainers for audiences to combat the confusion and misinformation about the coronavirus and spotlighted practical examples of solidarity. Efforts to strengthen language parity continued, with university partners captioning more than 40 videos into official languages.

Figure I
Growth in United Nations News users, February–June 2019 and February–June 2020

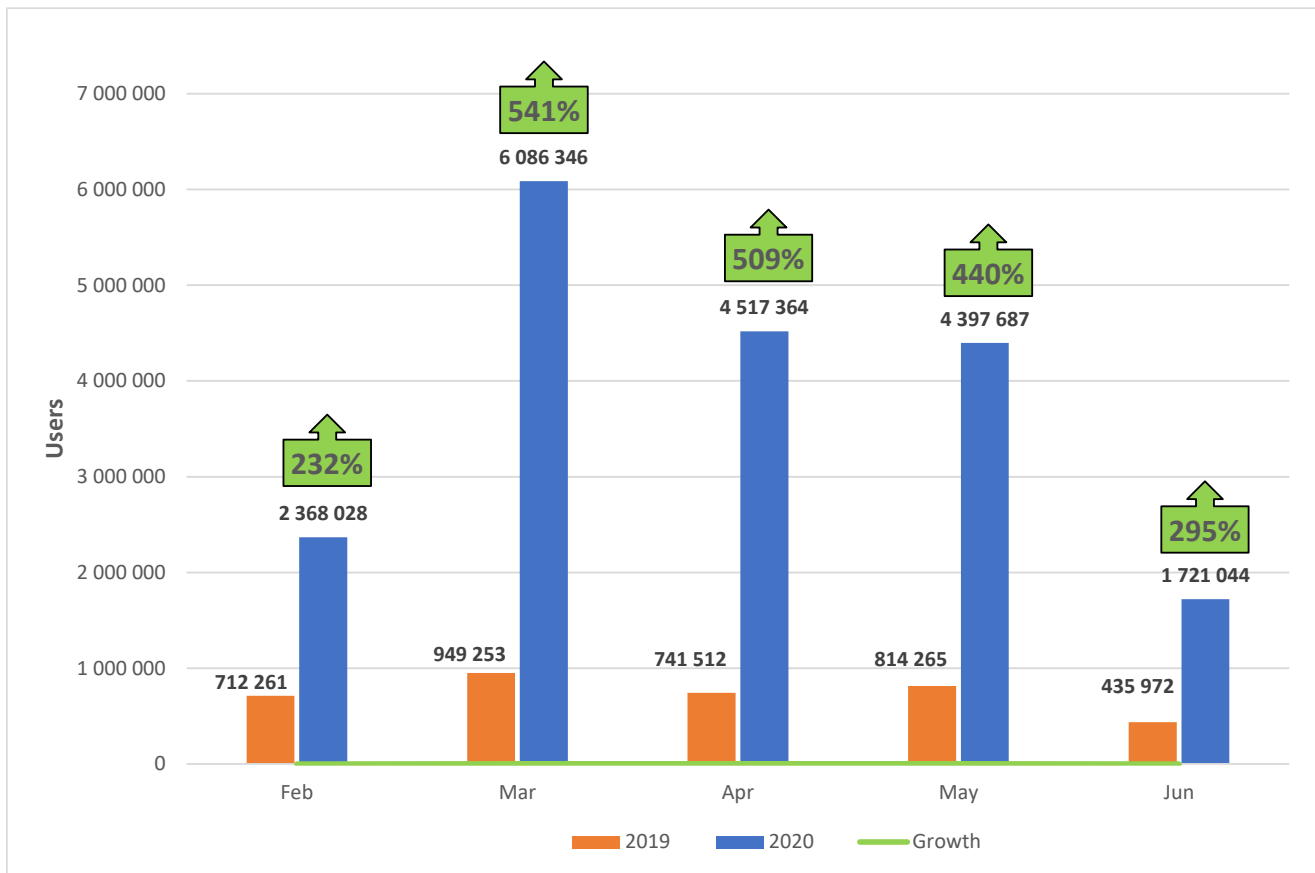
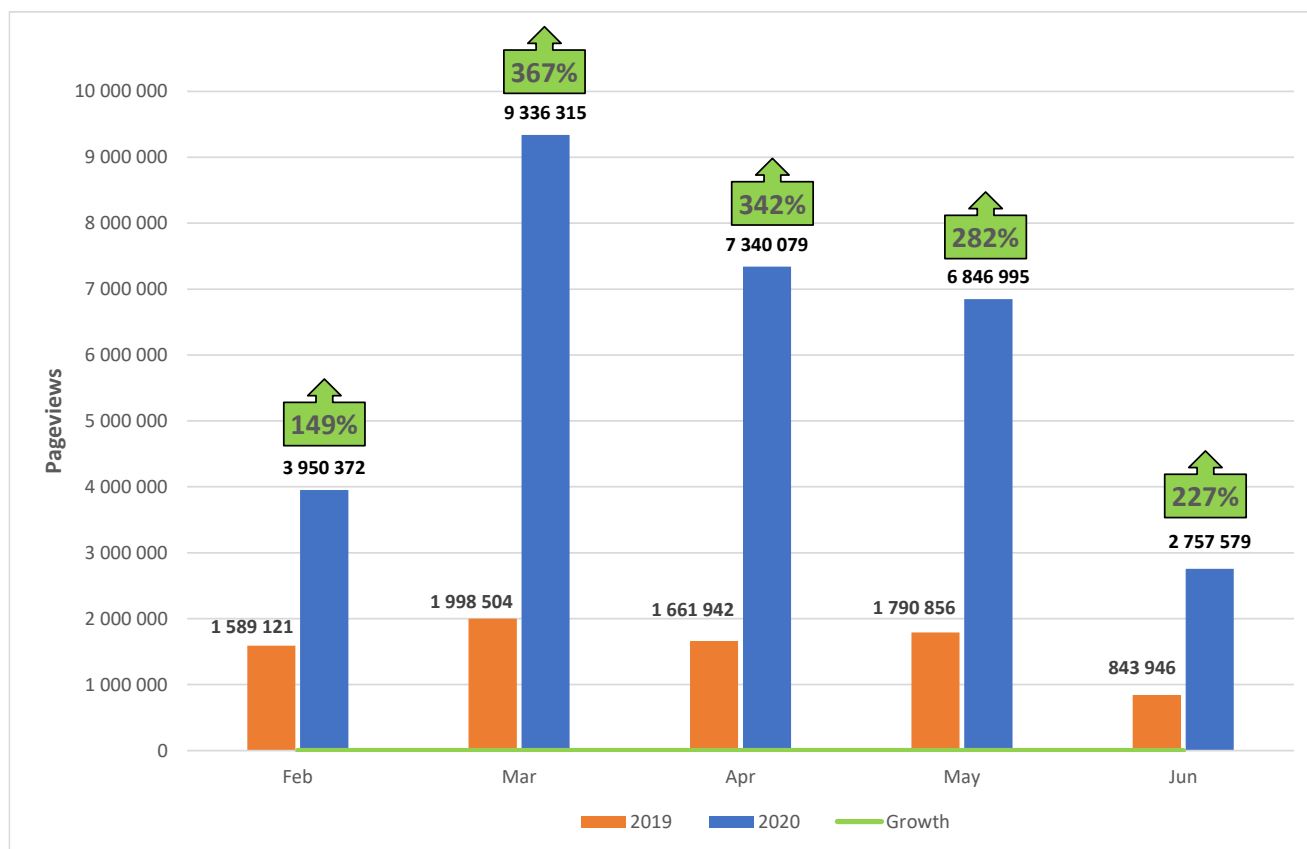


Figure II
Growth in United Nations News pageviews, February–June 2019 and February–June 2020



50. The growth in the audience of United Nations News in Arabic in March was unprecedented: pageviews increased by 1,000 per cent and the number of users by 1,772 per cent. In addition to the coverage of the pandemic, pressing issues continued to be covered, such as the situations in Libya, Palestine and Yemen. Popular features included a video interview with a female Tunisian peacekeeper, which was picked up by prominent news outlets, such as Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya and Al-Ekhbariya.

51. The Chinese Unit of United Nations News produced more than 30 interviews and in-depth reports on the front-line fight against COVID-19 with survivors, beneficiaries and United Nations experts in China, in addition to its regular coverage. Its account on Weibo now has more than 126 million followers, a four-fold increase from 2019. A recent post about United Nations staff participating in efforts in New York City to combat the pandemic broke a record, registering 6 million views.

52. Visitors to United Nations News in English increased by more than 140 per cent, with 8.8 million pageviews. The most-read story was “China shows COVID-19 coronavirus can be ‘stopped in its tracks’”, which reached a record 765,000 pageviews and was the most visited page on un.org in March and April. The most listened-to audio product was a podcast with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, “‘Entrepreneurs of intolerance’ compound COVID-19 racist backlash”, from the series *The Lid Is On*.

53. Pageviews for United Nations News in French increased by 273 per cent owing to its impactful and timely coverage of the United Nations response to the pandemic. During the reporting period, 90 of the 100 most-read articles were related to the

coronavirus. The most popular articles dealt with Africa, general advice to the population and the impact of the virus on children. The site's social media audiences also grew, with Twitter followers up by 73 per cent and Facebook followers up by 40 per cent compared with 2019.

54. With a new partner based in the United States of America, Radio Zindagi, United Nations News in Hindi saw an increase in pageviews of more than 350 per cent and in user numbers of 679 per cent compared with 2019. Website traffic through both organic searches and social media also showed steep increases, of some 1,300 per cent and 150 per cent, respectively. The Hindi Unit expanded its range of multimedia content, such as a report on the Sustainable Development Goals filed from the Jaipur Literature Festival in India.

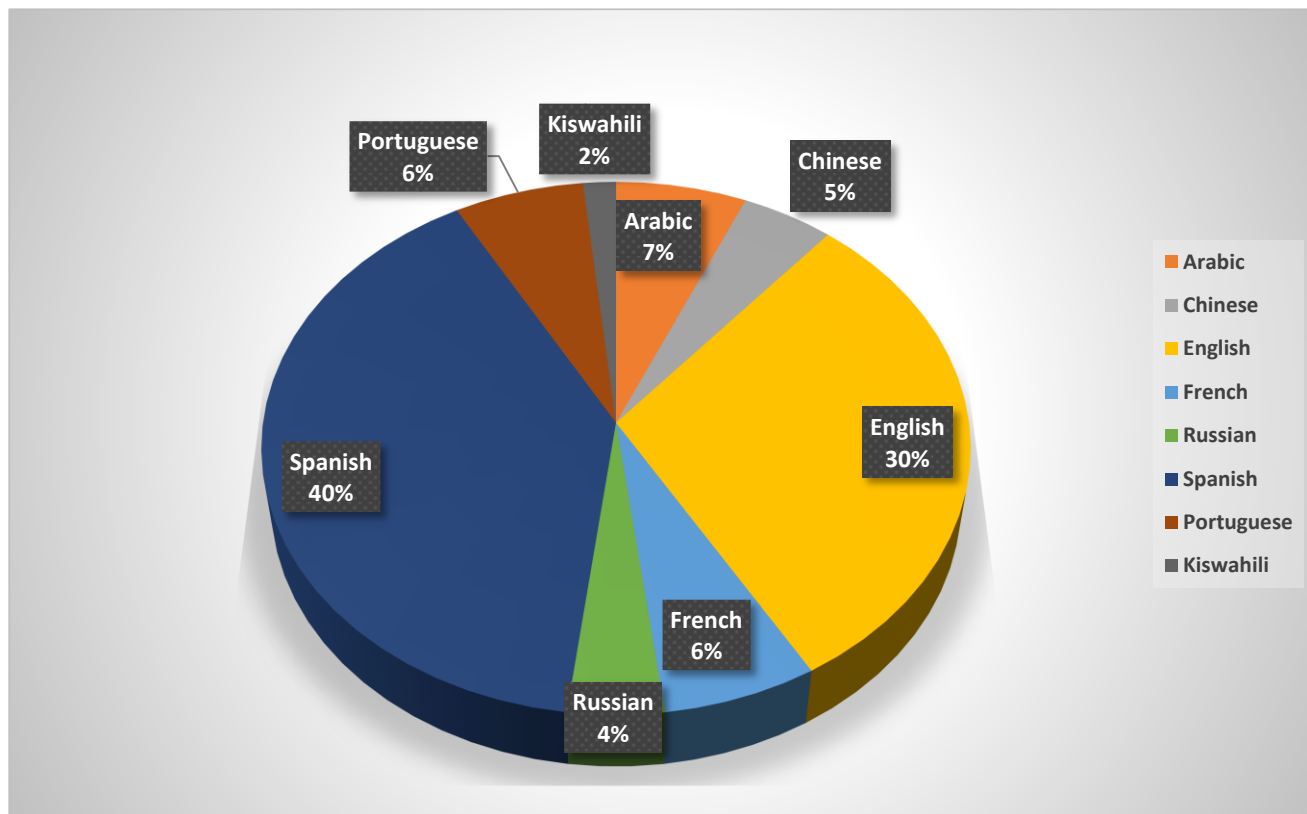
55. United Nations News in Kiswahili continued to tailor content to audiences and platforms in the East African region. Stories were picked up almost daily by news outlets, blogs and other online broadcasters in East Africa. Since the previous reporting period, United Nations News in Kiswahili has added 10 new partners, including traditional radio stations, mainstream television stations and online broadcasters.

56. In March, the Portuguese Unit saw an increase of 285 per cent in its pageviews. The Unit enhanced its partnerships with United Nations country teams in lusophone countries, established a major partnership with CNN Brazil and relaunched cooperation with SAPO Portugal, an online content aggregator. During the reporting period, subscribers of the Portuguese YouTube channel increased by 83 per cent, and the Unit took part in promoting the first World Portuguese Language Day.

57. During the reporting period, the Russian audience of United Nations News grew steadily, reaching more than 672,000 users, with pageviews exceeding 1.2 million, representing a 258 per cent increase over the same period in 2019. From-the-field reporting was a focus of coverage of the pandemic. Two social media campaigns co-organized by United Nations News in Russian, the Russian social media team and the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation were other highlights of the period: a joint initiative with countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the victory over Nazi rule and a Russian Language Day campaign.

58. United Nations News in Spanish worked closely with United Nations information centres and agencies across Latin America to expand its coverage of the region, and has broken records in the number of pageviews and visitors almost every month since February. In May, the site hit an all-time high of 3.37 million pageviews, making it the most visited site among the nine different language sites of United Nations News for the fourth straight month (see figure III). The site saw growth in pageviews of 505 per cent from February to June. The number of followers of the United Nations News in Spanish Twitter account grew by over 30 per cent, to 310,000 followers, owing in part to the live-tweeting of the regular press conferences of WHO on the pandemic.

Figure III
United Nations News pageviews by language, February–June 2020



C. Creative Community Outreach Initiative and multilingualism

59. The Department re-launched the Thomas and Friends Sustainable Development Goals educational videos campaign in Chinese, English, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese and Spanish to provide learning opportunities and educational resources for families while schools were closed owing to the pandemic, resulting in more than 400,000 additional views of the short videos, bringing the campaign total to over 6.3 million.

D. Sales and marketing and multilingualism

60. The United Nations iLibrary continued to expand its catalogue, adding 211 books, reports and other materials between February and June, bringing the total number of titles to 8,447. Over half of the materials were either multilingual or in a language other than English. Every month, the Sustainable Development Goal Book Club uses books in all official United Nations languages to engage children aged 6 to 12 on the Sustainable Development Goals. This year the Club featured books on multiple themes, including decent work and economic growth (Goal 8) and reduced inequalities (Goal 10).

V. Youth engagement

A. Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth

61. The Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth continues to engage young people and to advocate – both within and outside the United Nations system – for their engagement in priorities outlined in the United Nations Youth Strategy, including mental health, climate change and preventing violent extremism, as well as in United Nations processes and initiatives, such as the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the global dialogue initiative in the framework of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. In the COVID-19 context, the Office adapted its work to provide accurate information to young people about the pandemic while promoting global solidarity, as well as a safe online space for sharing ideas and concerns.

62. The pandemic-related initiatives of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth have included: a webinar series dedicated to young people and their mental health organized in collaboration with WHO and UNICEF, which reached 146,000 users; the Envoy's weekly blog highlighting young people's efforts to tackle the crisis; and the sharing of accurate and verified information. The Envoy continued to deliver virtual keynote speeches, statements and video messages.

63. The Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth reached more than 210,000 users through its website. More than 192,000 engagements were recorded between March and June on Twitter and 376,644 engagements in the same period on Facebook.

B. Youth engagement of the United Nations information centres

64. The engagement of United Nations information centres with young audiences continued; for example, the information centre in Nairobi hosted 200 youth delegates from 20 universities for the Kenya Model United Nations Conference; the information centre in Buenos Aires organized a virtual Model United Nations focused on the Sustainable Development Goals for 23 Argentine, Mexican and Uruguayan schools; and the information centre in Yaoundé exhibited documents and games and screened videos on National Youth Day. To encourage children to engage early with the principles of sustainability, the information centre in Jakarta launched the Sustainable Development Goals Book Club in Indonesia.

C. Youth engagement of the Civil Society Unit and Non-Governmental Liaison Service

65. Youth-led online events, in collaboration with the Department's Civil Society Youth Representatives Steering Committee, were held in April to share regional updates on the specific challenges faced during the pandemic, and to mark the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace (24 April) and the fiftieth anniversary of Earth Day (22 April) in order to strengthen youth engagement to more effectively address the climate emergency. The events garnered nearly 3,500 live views.

D. Youth engagement through the United Nations Academic Impact initiative

66. In March, the United Nations Academic Impact initiative launched #Work4UN, a multimedia, multilingual digital series on avenues young people can take to work for the United Nations. The series is available in all official United Nations languages and, to date, the articles and videos have been viewed more than 181,000 times on the United Nations Academic Impact website and YouTube channel and the United Nations WeChat page.

VI. Strategic communications services

A. Human rights

67. The International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda (12 April), organized in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Rwanda, was marked virtually with video messages by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, social media messages, a United Nations News story and a survivor's testimony.

68. The Department developed an online discussion series linking its mandated outreach programmes on the transatlantic slave trade, the Holocaust and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda to highlight the interlinked legacies of inequality and racism.

69. For International Albinism Awareness Day (13 June), the Department, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, provided outreach and communications support on social media and through a news article to raise awareness of the discrimination faced by people with albinism.

70. The Department, working closely with the President of the General Assembly, served as the secretariat for the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize. Two laureates were selected, although the in-person presentation of their awards was delayed owing to the pandemic.

71. The Department supported the multilingual communications and outreach efforts on the release of the Secretary-General's call to action on human rights (24 February) and, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, contributed to and facilitated the issuance of the "Guidance note on addressing and countering COVID-19-related hate speech" (11 May) in English and French.

B. Peace and security

72. The Department worked with the Department of Peace Operations to promote the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers (29 May), under the theme "Women in peacekeeping". Multimedia and social media products included profiles of women peacekeepers and interviews with national media in their countries, resulting in more than 225 articles in 29 countries. Traditional and social media outreach to 48 troop- and police-contributing countries reached millions of people and resulted in substantial online engagement.

73. In February, the Department, in conjunction with the Department of Peace Operations and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, organized another three-day training session on communicating about sexual exploitation and abuse for 14 senior United Nations field staff and African Union staff. The Department continued to ensure that United Nations external and internal websites contained the latest information on efforts to address sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by United Nations personnel.

74. The Department also produced communications guidance on United Nations statements and public comments issued in response to public protests as part of broader analytical and operational guidance for United Nations country teams and peace operations.

C. New Partnership for Africa's Development

75. During the reporting period, the Department reorganized its work to produce news content focusing on Africa's response to the pandemic, working in close coordination with key partners: the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the African Union, the African Union Development Agency, the Economic Commission for Africa and United Nations information centres.

76. The Department interviewed the WHO Regional Director for Africa, the Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, the Chief Executive Officer of the African Union Development Agency, the Secretary-General of the African Continental Free Trade Area, and the heads of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the Africa Bureau of the United Nations Development Programme on the continent's preparedness and response. The interviews, along with feature stories including on the pandemic's impact on people with disabilities and online campaigns to salute African health-care workers and female peacekeepers from the continent, were widely disseminated through the Department's digital channels, including to more than 206,000 social media followers. Visits to the *Africa Renewal* website (www.un.org/africarenewal) increased to more than 1.5 million, and the number of e-newsletter subscribers grew to over 4,000.

77. The Department helped to craft and distribute an op-ed by the Deputy Secretary-General on COVID-19 recovery for *Africa Renewal* that was translated into French, Portuguese and Kiswahili and republished by 44 publications. *Africa Renewal* produced 77 articles during the reporting period that were republished by 327 media outlets in various countries, including Algeria, Czechia, Germany, Poland, Senegal, Uganda, the United States, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

78. Support provided to other departments included redesigning the website of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and providing communications support for the Africa Dialogue Series 2020 (20–22 May).

D. Decolonization

79. The Department, working in close consultation with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, produced a leaflet entitled "Ten frequently asked questions on the United Nations and decolonization". The leaflet is being translated into all official languages and posted online. Other activities in support of the United Nations decolonization agenda are detailed in the report of the Secretary-General on the dissemination of information on decolonization ([A/AC.109/2020/18](https://www.un.org/africarenewal/2020/10/18)).

80. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library received some 30 extensive research requests on the topic of decolonization.

E. Special information programme on the question of Palestine

81. The Department promoted virtual activities organized by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, including the United Nations Forum on the Question of Palestine (4 June), an online conversation with the Prime Minister of the State of Palestine (18 May) and two other special events on 14 and 21 April related to the impact of the pandemic in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The events were promoted digitally, including on United Nations social media accounts and a training programme alumni Facebook group of more than 85 Palestinian journalists.

VII. Outreach and advocacy

A. Civil Society Unit and Non-Governmental Liaison Service

82. Before the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development was postponed, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service had completed preparatory rounds of accreditation of NGOs, academic institutions and private sector organizations, and had supported the participation of, and inputs from, civil society to a stakeholder hearing on the Conference. In cooperation with UN-Women, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service also led an accreditation process for the 25-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which remains to be rescheduled.

B. Visitors' services

83. Until the pandemic-related suspension of public access to United Nations premises in March, more than 30,000 visitors joined tours and briefings in Geneva, Nairobi, New York, and Vienna. Tours were conducted in more than 20 languages and tailored to audience or themes. In New York, Black History Month and UN Kids Day in February were particularly popular, with more than 1,000 participants, and Vienna hosted the traditional school holiday programme "Ferienspiel".

C. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

84. The Strategic Outlook 2025 of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library was finalized and incorporated diverse outputs from the Library's working group. The Outlook is accompanied by annual workplans, defining the actions and projects to be undertaken to achieve the strategic goals of the Library, which include enhancing multilingualism, engaging the global scholarly community and harnessing innovative technologies.

85. To facilitate access to United Nations content, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library analysed and uploaded more than 8,200 United Nations parliamentary documents and publications to the United Nations Digital Library and the Official Document System. COVID-19-related content was prioritized. The United Nations Digital Library recorded more than 1.5 million unique downloads in the six official languages.

86. To preserve the unique history of the United Nations, more than 7,600 historical documents (representing 52,390 pages) were digitized and made available online, including 826 documents from the Special Political and Decolonization Committee of the General Assembly and 539 documents from the Trusteeship Council. The Dag

Hammar skjöld Library will continue to address this important function within the scope of its available resources.

VIII. News and media

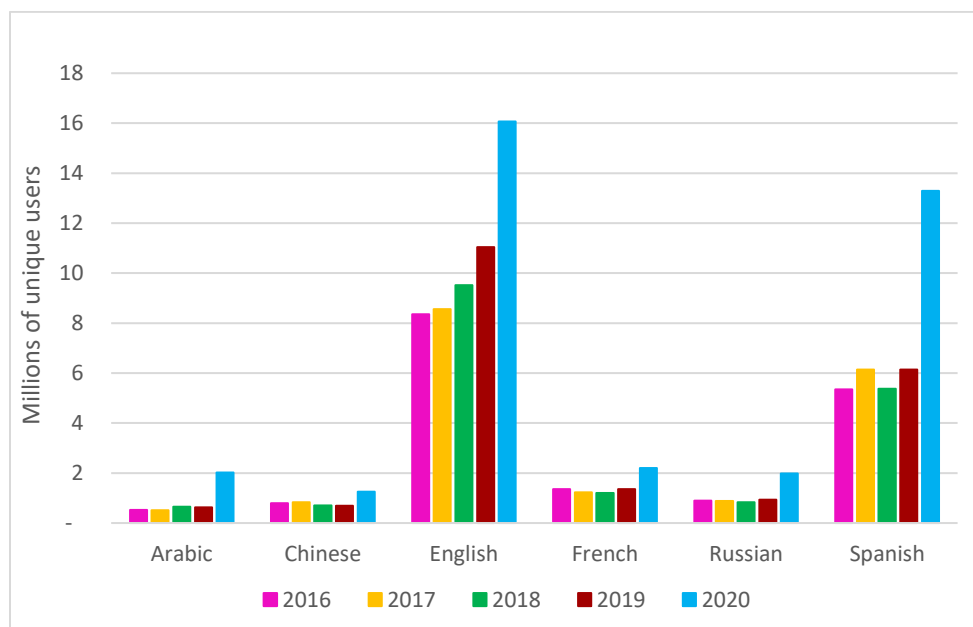
A. Web and digital

87. During the reporting period, the Department created, maintained and expanded websites in multiple languages for United Nations meetings, initiatives and international days, such as the 2021 Food Systems Summit, the Spotlight Initiative and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations. New websites were launched for: the Road Map for Digital Cooperation; the Secretary-General's Data Strategy; the *Awake at Night* podcast series; and International Tea Day. Governance of United Nations websites remained a priority, and the Secretariat website branding standards were updated and implemented.

88. The www.un.org website reached 36 million users across languages from February to May 2020, an increase of 77 per cent compared with 2019. All languages registered significant growth in reach, with the largest audience growth in Spanish (7 million users) and English (5 million users), and the greatest rates of increase in Arabic (219 per cent), Spanish (116 per cent) and Russian (112 per cent) (see figure IV).

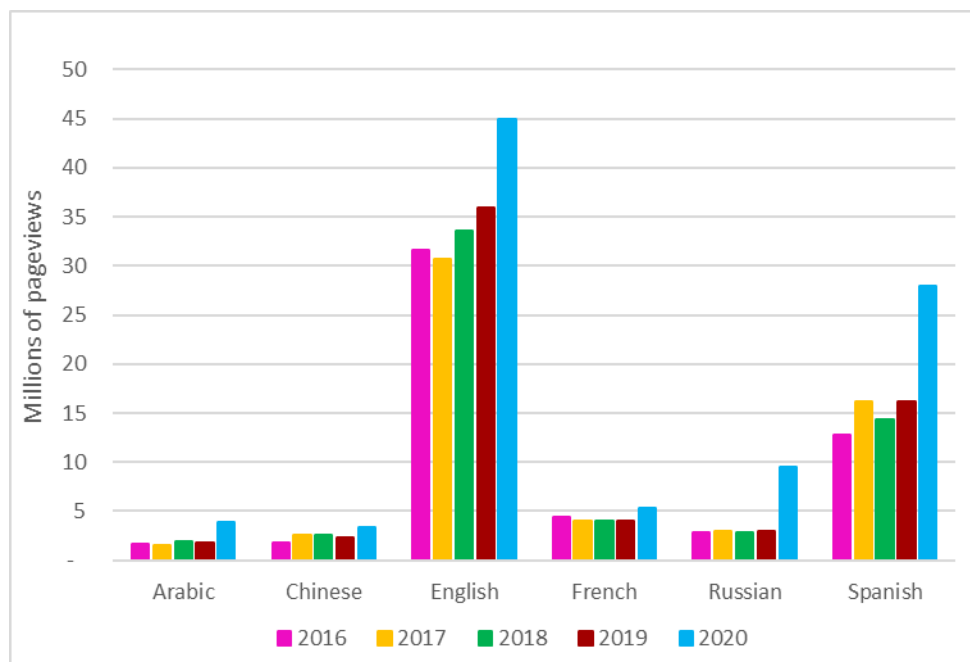
Figure IV

Reach (users) by language, February–May 2016–2020



89. Audience engagement also increased in all languages between February and May 2020 compared with 2019, and by the largest increment during this period than in any of the previous five years. Total pageviews in all languages reached 94.8 million, an increase of 50 per cent over the same period last year. The largest increases were in Spanish (11 million), English (9 million) and Russian (6 million) (see figure V).

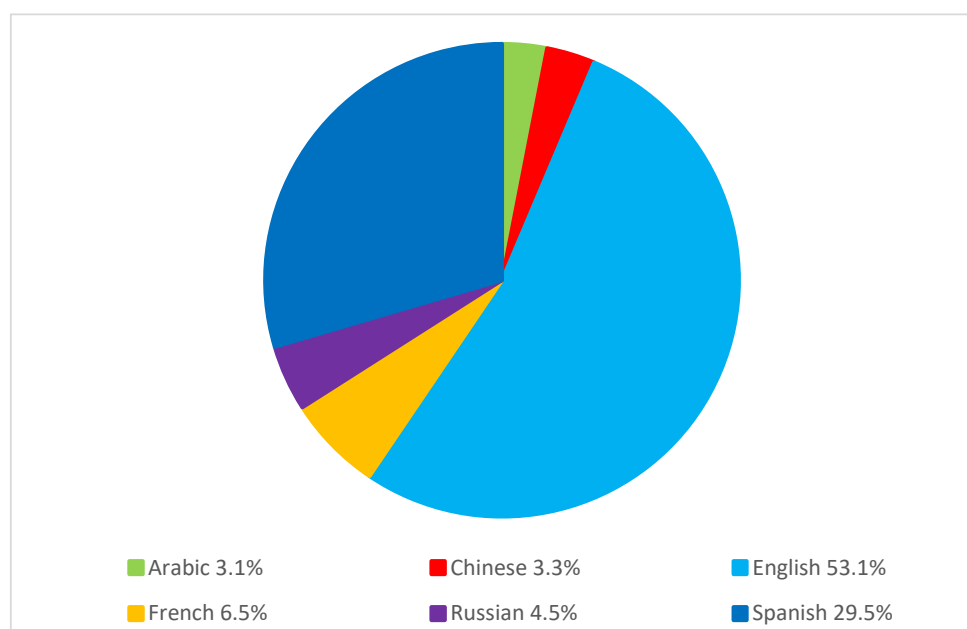
Figure V
Engagement (pageviews) by language, February–May 2016–2020



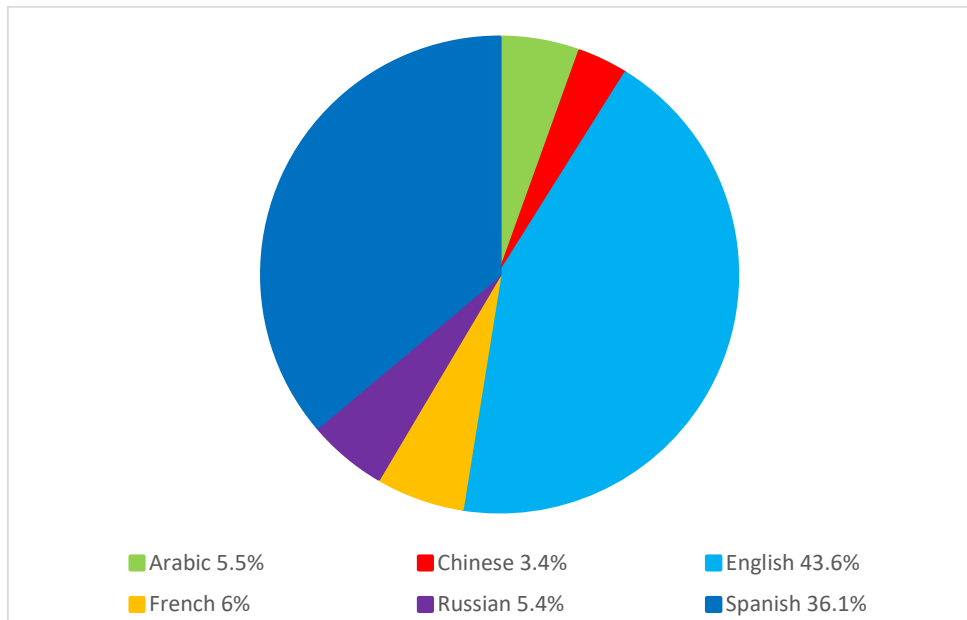
90. While audience share by language remained largely stable between 2016 and 2019, from February to May 2020 Arabic, Russian and Spanish increased their share of the total audience (see figure VI).

Figure VI
Year-on-year comparison of audience share by language

A. February–May 2019



B. February–May 2020



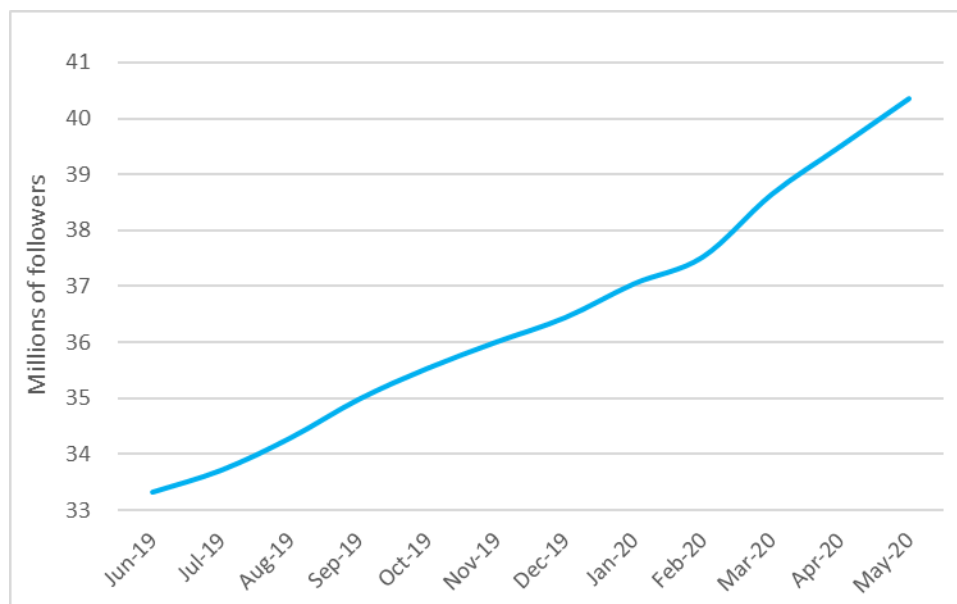
B. Social media

91. Highlighting the United Nations response to COVID-19, the Department recalibrated its social media strategy in the official languages, Portuguese, Kiswahili and Hindi to focus primarily on the crisis. The demand for accurate information about the pandemic was demonstrated by significant growth in the reach and engagement of the United Nations corporate accounts.

92. Audiences on social media increased sharply during the reporting period (see figure VII). Total followers of the United Nations Twitter account increased by more than 1.2 million in the four months to 31 May, with average engagements per post per month almost tripled compared with the previous four months. The United Nations Twitter account in Arabic reached a milestone 1 million followers in April. The United Nations Instagram account saw a 20 per cent increase in followers, with English approaching 5 million. The number of WeChat followers grew by over 45 per cent, with over 200,000 followers added. Engagement increased consistently on all platforms: on Instagram, multiple stories registered more than 100,000 views, and there were consistently high levels of engagement through until the final frame of the videos.

93. The Verified initiative was launched through the United Nations accounts in all languages, and over 29,000 engagements with the launch video were recorded on the United Nations Twitter account. In the first three weeks of the initiative, all related content registered more than 47,000 engagements on Facebook and 89,000 on Instagram in all languages. On Facebook, the launch video received at least 700,000 views.

Figure VII
**Growth in followers of all corporate United Nations social media accounts,
 June 2019–May 2020**



94. In April, the United Nations launched a corporate social media account on the youth-oriented TikTok platform. The launch video, featuring the Secretary-General participating in the Safe Hands challenge related to COVID-19, garnered more than 8.9 million views.

C. Press and meetings services

95. During the period under review, the Meetings Coverage Section published 989 press releases, amounting to 3,721 pages in English and French, covering the activities of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, as well as daily briefings held by the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

96. Since the suspension of in-person meetings owing to COVID-19, the Meetings Coverage Section has produced press releases on virtual public sessions of the Security Council, resolutions and decisions adopted under the silence procedure by the General Assembly and round-ups of the virtual segments of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council.

97. United Nations Web TV adapted its workflow during the pandemic to continue to cover meetings of the Security Council, General Assembly, briefings and other events and to distribute them to broadcasters worldwide. It assisted in recording and distributing video messages by the Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials.

98. The Webcast Unit continued to provide coverage on multiple platforms and devices. During the reporting period, over 30 million people watched live and on-demand streaming coverage of United Nations meetings and events directly from the United Nations Web TV website, the United Nations channel on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. The United Nations YouTube channel gained about 75,000 new subscribers during the reporting period, reaching a total of 700,000 subscribers

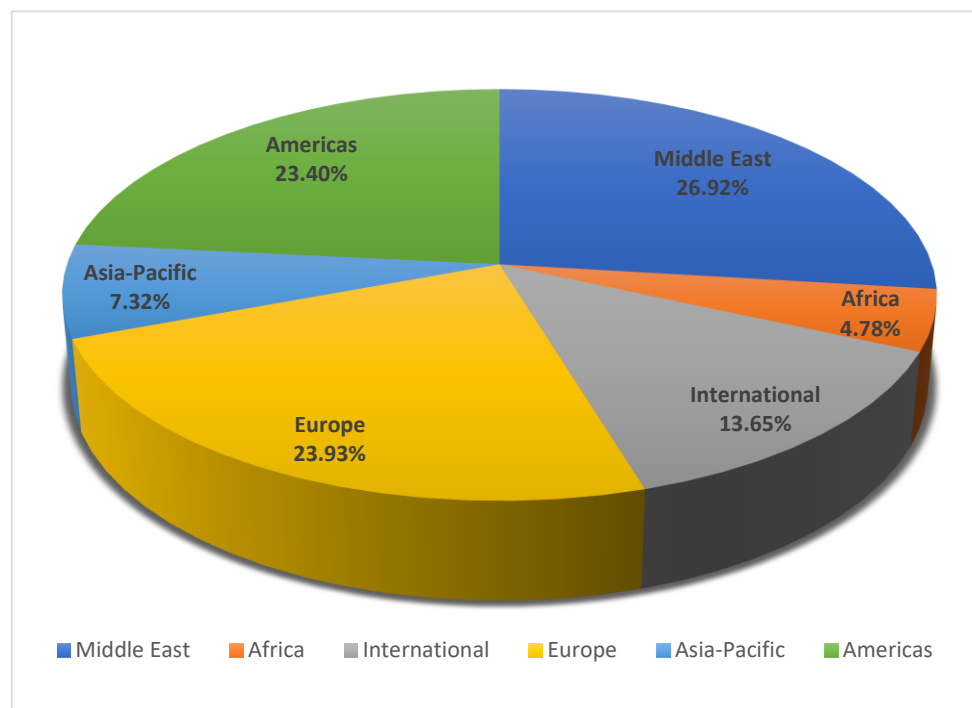
99. Owing to COVID-19, the Webcast Unit implemented a remote workflow, streaming live virtual meetings on United Nations Web TV and social media platforms. The team created a special COVID-19 playlist of about 200 videos that includes all WHO press briefings, as well as the briefings and video messages by the Secretary-General and other events on the issue.

100. The Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit shared information regarding virtual meetings, events and briefings with members of the press, including sending some 100 media alerts in the first half of 2020. It also shared reports, statements and press releases from the United Nations system and Member States. It maintained ongoing communication with the United Nations Correspondents Association on matters of access and working conditions affected by the pandemic.

D. Video, television and photo

101. UNifeed remains a successful component of the Department's outreach to broadcasters: a single distribution point for broadcasters worldwide for video material across the United Nations. UNifeed stories were broadcast 63,179 times from February to June 2020, an increase of 46 per cent compared with the same period in 2019. On average, more than 800 broadcasters used UNifeed material monthly, with the highest number from the Middle East region (see figure VIII). International broadcasters using materials from UNifeed include CNN, Al-Jazeera, and Africanews, which broadcasts in 33 sub-Saharan countries.

Figure VIII
Broadcasters by region



102. The Video Section increased its production of messages from the Secretary-General for social media platforms. Among the COVID-19 policy briefs and related video messages, the most popular was the Secretary-General's appeal for a global ceasefire, which garnered 1.2 million views on Twitter, 249,000 on IGTV, 328,000 on Facebook and 122,000 on YouTube.

103. The Video Section, in collaboration with the Government of India and the United Nations Environment Programme, produced a documentary on zero carbon farming in India. Representatives of the Section travelled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to highlight the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on for Human Rights in a documentary shared with broadcast partners through the UN in Action programme.

104. The United Nations Photo Library fulfilled 1,355 requests from international media, publishers, filmmakers, permanent missions and educational and cultural institutions, as well as United Nations offices around the world. Photos from the United Nations collection were used for exhibits, online multimedia projects, social media, presentations and research projects around the world.

105. The United Nations Photo website received 1,320,750 pageviews, and 49,415 high-resolution photos were downloaded directly from the website during the reporting period. In addition, more than 55,350 photos were distributed by the Photo Library. Some 4,235 photos were captioned and had metadata enhanced for more accurate search results and effective discovery on the Internet.

106. The United Nations Audiovisual Library fulfilled 2,248 requests for footage to be used in the production of daily news stories, documentaries, online productions and educational programmes from a wide range of clients, such as United Nations offices, diplomatic missions, media, educational and cultural institutions and independent producers. The Audiovisual Library website received 242,131 pageviews and 30,300 video views. Almost 33,000 audio and video files were downloaded from the website and distributed to clients. The Audiovisual Library continued to digitize selected historical audiovisual archives, with the support of the Government of Oman. To date, the project has digitized approximately 35 per cent of the United Nations historical collection.

E. Partners

107. The Department continues to license United Nations content across the media sector to help to amplify the reach of that content to traditional broadcasters, online publishers and emerging platforms. During the reporting period, new licensing agreements were established with broadcast outlets in eastern and southern Africa and the United States. To attract new audiences to United Nations audio content, including messages of the Secretary-General and United Nations News content relating to the pandemic, the Department established agreements with the online audio platforms Spotify, Castbox and SoundCloud.

IX. Seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and Expo 2020

A. Seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations

108. For the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations, the Yearbook Unit prepared a commemorative publication entitled *Achieving our Common Humanity: Celebrating Global Cooperation through the United Nations*. The book invites people to join a worldwide conversation on how to tackle challenges in shaping a common future of shared prosperity and a healthy planet. While recounting decisive innovations at the level of global policy and international agreement, *Achieving our Common Humanity* also portrays how such changes have improved the lives of individuals around the world from the inception of the United Nations, up to and including its response to the pandemic.

109. To ensure that the global conversation in the framework of the seventy-fifth anniversary on the future that people want beyond 2030 is inclusive, United Nations information centres translated and disseminated the seventy-fifth anniversary survey into 60 languages and organized outreach to Governments, civil society, academia and youth organizations. The information centre in Harare helped to organize a virtual concert that was live-streamed on Facebook to 40,000 people, at which six prominent artists performed to highlight the seventy-fifth anniversary, COVID-19 and other global issues. The information centre in Beirut organized online consultations with young people about the seventy-fifth anniversary in Arabic, English and French; the information centre in Lagos coordinated the Deputy Secretary-General's dialogue with youth on the seventy-fifth anniversary at the studios of Channels Television Abuja; and the information centre in Canberra organized virtual briefings for students in Australia.

110. The United Nations Academic Impact initiative hosted a series of online discussions in support of the seventy-fifth anniversary, with more than 1,000 registered participants, who examined the topics in the seventy-fifth anniversary issue briefs and the role of higher education in addressing the world's most pressing problems. The webinars were scheduled at different times to facilitate participation in different regions and were held in multiple languages. Participants were encouraged to take the seventy-fifth anniversary survey, and more than 1,200 surveys were completed.

B. Expo 2020

111. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, Expo 2020 was postponed by a year, until 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022, by the International Exhibitions Bureau. The postponement will enable the Department to build on the existing communications assets curated from across the United Nations system to deliver a more engaging experience at Expo 2020 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

X. Conclusion

112. The global health crisis caused by COVID-19 has thrown into stark relief many of the challenges that the world community is now facing: gender, economic and educational inequality; the digital divide; the scourge of war and how it undermines development, including access to health care; the growing climate crisis and how it contributes to the rise and spread of pandemics; and the tsunami of misinformation and disinformation that endangers lives when it drowns out reliable news and facts. But the pandemic has also highlighted what is possible: decreased carbon emissions and air pollution from factories and vehicles; neighbours coming together to help each other; and the use of data and technological innovation to foster solutions.

113. As the United Nations commemorates 75 years of operation, it is a time to consider what the Organization has accomplished since it was formed out of the ashes of a world war, but also what lies ahead. The threats today are just as real and as deadly as those that were faced in 1945, and it will take concerted, multilateral action to continue to build a more peaceful and just world. The Department of Global Communications continues to evolve in order to meet these challenges by using communications not only to inform, but also to advocate and inspire. By reaching people in languages that they understand, through media accessible to them and with content that engages and empowers, we can help to create a world in which everyone thrives in peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet.