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Chair: Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Statement by the President of the General Assembly on the work of the Committee

1. **Mr. Kutesa** (Uganda), President of the General Assembly, said that the Department of Public Information had been instrumental in implementing the United Nations system's strategy in the field of information and communication and that it should continue enhancing the visibility of the General Assembly. It was now essential for the Department to raise awareness of sustainable development and mobilize support for the post-2015 development agenda, as well as other important issues on the agenda of the current session, with the continued support of Member States. The Fourth Committee played a crucial role in discussing the challenging and important issues on the agenda of the United Nations and in promoting the purposes and principles of the Organization.

2. As Member States were aware, the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, proclaimed by the General Assembly in affirmation of its determination to take all steps necessary to speed up the decolonization process with a view to the complete elimination of colonialism, was approaching its midpoint. There was still work to be done despite the noteworthy progress made. Indeed, decolonization was one of the greatest success stories of the United Nations. At the time of its establishment in 1945, almost one third of the world's population had been living in Territories under colonial administration; currently, only about two million people remained in the 17 Territories still officially classified as Non-Self-Governing. With the necessary political will, it would be possible to bring closure to that colonial legacy.

3. The summer's tragic events in the Middle East had shown that that still-fragile situation required the sustained attention of the global community. During the plenary Assembly's recent general debate, many delegations had expressed concern about the situation and support for a two-State solution, taking into account the legitimate interests of both Israel and the State of Palestine, and had called for the United Nations to play a more decisive role in that regard. Regrettably, the path towards peace was still uncertain. The United Nations should help the parties to overcome differences and resume direct talks, and should continue to support their efforts to achieve a

just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

4. Peacekeeping, peacebuilding and special political missions continued to be critical in the promotion of peace, security and stability worldwide and must be supported, as they were the Organization's core mechanism for conflict prevention and resolution. In an increasingly complex and challenging international security environment, those missions operated under very dangerous conditions that posed risks to United Nations personnel and assets. Recently, United Nations peacekeepers in Mali and elsewhere had lost their lives in the line of duty; the international community must stand united in condemning the perpetrators of such attacks. The men and women involved in peacekeeping missions deserved not only gratitude, but also an efficient system that provided clear mandates, guidance, resources and training. He encouraged the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations to continue its good work in that regard.

5. In line with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, regional organizations continued to play an important role in the maintenance of peace and security. The United Nations and regional organizations had complementary capacities that, when properly coordinated and utilized, could contribute decisively to the prevention and management of armed conflict. In recent years, those relationships had been strengthened and deepened across a wide spectrum of activities, including peacekeeping. Cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union had yielded positive results in Somalia. The Organization had also worked alongside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Kosovo and Afghanistan, and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) played a positive role in support of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). He was committed to promoting such cooperation during the current session of the General Assembly, in recognition of the unique expertise that regional and subregional organizations offered. Their comparative advantages and geographical proximity made them important stakeholders in peace and security issues. In the second quarter of 2015, he would convene a high-level thematic debate on strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

6. During the Committee's deliberations on international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, it had held a panel discussion on sustainable

development in the context of the post-2015 development agenda. The use of space and space-based technology could contribute to global sustainable development in areas such as food security, water management, disaster risk reduction and early warning systems. He encouraged Member States to promote and increase international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space for the benefit of humanity, and assured the Committee of his steadfast support for its important work.

Agenda item 54: Questions relating to information
(A/69/21 and A/69/310)

7. **Mr. Silwamba** (Zambia), speaking as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report on its thirty-sixth session (A/69/21), during which it had endorsed the application of Iraq for membership of that Committee. In the debates at that session, the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and of the Department of Public Information as its public voice had been emphasized. Regarding information and communication technologies (ICTs), the growing disparity in the use of the official United Nations languages on the Organization's website, despite the Department's efforts to improve multilingual content, had been cited as a matter of concern. On the other hand, the Department had been commended for its partnership arrangements for increasing the availability of multilingual content in a cost-neutral manner and for its continued efforts to enhance the accessibility of the United Nations website.

8. The Department had been called upon once again to collaborate with other departments on a strategy to deliver daily press releases in all six official languages through creative schemes in a cost-neutral manner; the view had been expressed that adherence to the principle of parity among the six official languages was part of the Department's mandate. Such initiatives should not, however, result in a situation in which fewer meetings received press coverage, especially in cases where the bodies concerned did not receive summary record coverage; otherwise, there would be no way to ensure transparency, accountability and institutional memory.

9. The network of United Nations information centres had been described as a vital source of information for local communities. The growth of United Nations Academic Impact as a global platform for universities and research organizations had been

welcomed, as had the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine.

10. In response to the consensus on the need to augment multilingualism in the work of the Department of Public Information, the Chair of the Committee on Information had proposed creating a Group of Friends to collaborate with the Department on effective, pragmatic and creative ways to address that issue.

11. **Mr. Nasser** (Acting Head of the Department of Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/69/310), said that the Department's strategic approach had been best reflected in its overall outreach efforts during the high-level segment of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, when it had deployed the full array of media tools at its disposal and had further energized and expanded its pool of outreach partners so as to engage audiences worldwide. The Department had played a critical role in the success of the Secretary-General's Climate Summit, held on 23 September 2014, by conducting large-scale outreach to media, civil society and other stakeholders. It had developed key messages, created communications products, provided content for the Summit website and led a United Nations-wide social media strategy in support of the Summit. The Department had also led communication efforts for other key events during the high-level segment, such as the Zero Hunger Challenge high-level dialogue and the launch of the Millennium Development Goal Gap Task Force report for 2014.

12. The Department had also worked closely with the Office of the President of the General Assembly and the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in promoting the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples, held on 22 and 23 September 2014, and had covered the Conference extensively on its multilingual news platforms. The Department had cooperated with other United Nations offices to promote wider participation in the annual treaty event and to prepare for the International Decade for People of African Descent.

13. In collaboration with United Nations and other partners, the Department had provided organizational and media support for the "Africa Rising" forum held on 22 September 2014. It had also helped to mark Africa Week by arranging individual media interviews and a press conference with senior officials and

holding an event at the Dag Hammarskjöld Library to demonstrate how to access United Nations research materials related to Africa. It had continued to raise awareness of the permanent memorial to honour the memory of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, to be inaugurated at United Nations Headquarters in 2015. The Department had also worked with the Department of Political Affairs to promote activities to mark the International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

14. Interest in the work of the United Nations during the general debate and related high-level meetings had reached unprecedented levels on social media. More than 27 million people had viewed the Department's updates on Facebook, and climate content on Twitter was estimated to have been seen by half of all active users. The level of interest generated through Chinese social media, such as the Weibo platform, had also been particularly strong.

15. As part of the Department's efforts to make better strategic use of its United Nations information centres, it had organized live briefings, via a web-based videoconferencing tool, on the Climate Summit and other topics reflecting the main agenda items at the current General Assembly session. Member States had collaborated with the Department on efforts to better explain the work of United Nations peacekeeping and political missions to the global public. With the help of the information centres, the Department promoted the efforts of troop-contributing countries through outreach campaigns and bolstered the troops' communication skills before they were deployed.

16. The Department aimed to ensure a balance between new and traditional means of communication. The latter included United Nations Radio, United Nations Television, the United Nations News Centre and United Nations Photo, and had posted record levels of engagement. Some 2,500 journalists from around the world had been accredited and assisted by the Department in their coverage of various meetings at United Nations Headquarters.

17. During the week of the general debate, some 150 events had been webcast live in the six official languages. In 2014 the Department had created a dedicated online portal providing access to video, audio, text and summaries of Member States' statements, as well as a customized website for the President of the sixty-ninth session of the General

Assembly. In addition, the Department had launched two new applications for reading and listening to United Nations content in different languages on mobile devices. The Department had also signed an agreement with ICFLix, the first on-demand video-streaming platform in the Middle East and North Africa, to stream United Nations Television programmes online.

18. In light of the ongoing outbreak of the Ebola virus, the Department had created a dedicated website on the United Nations system-wide response. The website would feature status updates, the newly established United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) and a link for making donations. The Department was chairing an inter-agency Ebola Communications Group and had mobilized United Nations information centres in sub-Saharan Africa to provide regular updates on measures taken by United Nations country teams and Governments.

19. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library had expanded and customized its services; the new "DAG Discovery" search tool was backed up by a one-stop service desk that would respond to any query within an hour. "Ask DAG" was a multilingual online service that provided answers to frequently asked questions on United Nations topics and addressed requests from researchers worldwide. In conjunction with the Library at the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued to digitize pre-1993 United Nations documents and had launched a pilot digital repository. In addition, iSeek, the United Nations Intranet, was now accessible from mobile devices and home computers.

20. The United Nations Academic Impact initiative, currently almost four years old, remained the gateway through which institutions of higher learning and research could connect with the United Nations and each other in promoting key priorities on the United Nations agenda. Member institutions were planning a wide range of activities to commemorate the Organization's seventieth anniversary, including the establishment of a scholarship for disadvantaged students. Currently, the initiative was launching a new annual conversation series with globally renowned scholars.

21. The Department continued to expand its outreach to civil society and members of the creative

community. A record 2,200 representatives of some 700 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in nearly 100 countries had participated in the Department's sixty-fifth annual NGO conference, which had focused on the post-2015 development agenda. The remarks made by the Department's newest Messenger of Peace, the award-winning actor and environmental activist Leonardo DiCaprio, at the opening of the Climate Summit had achieved unprecedented social media exposure, reaching nearly half of all Twitter users, and had been viewed more than 1.5 million times on the YouTube channel of the United Nations. On 27 September 2014, the Global Citizen Festival, a star-studded concert supporting the post-2015 development agenda, had attracted a live audience of 60,000, while millions more had watched the concert on television and over the Internet.

22. In September, the Department had launched a new Arabic-language version of *Basic Facts about the United Nations*, the first such edition since 1980. Funded by the United Arab Emirates, whose generosity was sincerely appreciated, it would be distributed to information centres and other outlets throughout the Arabic-speaking world, including schools.

23. With respect to the indication, in section B of the draft resolution on questions relating to information (A/69/21, chap. IV), that the Department was encouraged to make the *UN Chronicle* available in paperless editions only, with a view to expanding the service to all six official languages within existing resources, he said that the cost of translating that publication into five official languages would far exceed total printing costs in English and French only. While the Department would still meet the needs of its paid subscribers, United Nations information centres in many countries continued to rely on print publications for outreach and information purposes. The Department's efforts to live up to its commitments to the global audience would continue to be guided by the Fourth Committee's recommendations and budgetary decisions.

24. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) recalled that the Department of Public Information was responsible for conducting promotional campaigns on the dialogue among civilizations and the culture of peace as a means of countering violence and violent extremism; that issue, which had been raised by the Iranian President in 2013, was particularly significant in view of the rise in violent extremism, of which the

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) was a prime example. In previous years, the Department had organized a number of seminars on the dialogue among civilizations, and he hoped that the Department would resume such initiatives, which concerned issues of importance to the international community. Noting the short duration of the Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme and the low number of participants, he asked whether it could be lengthened and include more participants from developing countries.

25. **Mr. Vallarino** (Argentina), commending the Department's promotion of multilingualism, noted with appreciation that statements delivered by Heads of State during the high-level segment of the current General Assembly session had been broadcast live in the original languages. However, the archived webcasts of those statements were available in English only. He asked whether such webcasts could be archived in the original languages, as that would help to spread the message of the United Nations.

26. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) said that she fully understood the challenges faced by the Department. She asked what plans had been made to increase the Organization's visibility by strengthening partnerships, both under the United Nations Academic Impact initiative and with celebrities. She would also welcome information on the reinforcement of resources for United Nations information centres worldwide, in light of the additional tasks and challenges facing the United Nations. Lastly, she asked what actions the Department would recommend to ensure the accessibility and continued widespread publication of the *UN Chronicle*.

27. **Mr. Nasser** (Acting Head of the Department of Public Information) said that working to build a culture of peace and a dialogue among civilizations was central to the Organization and that one issue of the *UN Chronicle* had been dedicated to that topic. The Department was continuing its activities on the theme "Unlearning intolerance" through a number of events, including Academic Impact activities, annual observances of the International Day of Peace and model United Nations conferences focusing on dialogue and understanding. Under the Reham Al-Farra Fellowship Programme, there had been 15 fellows in 2014, compared to 11 in 2013. There was a set budget earmarked for the Programme, which meant that the increase in the number of participating journalists had

been possible only because the duration had been reduced from six to four weeks.

28. Concerning multilingualism, he said that while all public intergovernmental meetings were webcast live, meeting archives were available only in the original language and English because storage in the six official languages required more gigabytes of memory, which cost more money. The Department was working closely with all United Nations information centres using low-cost videoconferencing technology, and its immediate priority was to provide training; it was doing its best within the limited resources available. Regarding the *UN Chronicle*, the Department did not have enough resources to produce the publication in all six languages, even if it discontinued print editions, and would thus continue to issue eight editions per biennium as in the past.

29. The Department's partnerships with universities, celebrities and NGOs were intended to multiply the Organization's ability to reach wide audiences. With more than 1,000 Academic Impact universities in over 120 countries, the Organization was able to engage with a large body of young minds and future leaders with regard to issues on the United Nations agenda. In partnering with celebrities, the Department tried to identify those with a track record of working on issues that were important to the Organization. Many United Nations entities appointed goodwill ambassadors at the national level, as local personalities were sometimes more relevant than international celebrities. It was important to take a strategic approach and to avoid asking too much of such partners, so as to ensure that partnerships were beneficial to both parties. The Organization's goal was to increase understanding of what it could and could not do.

30. **Mr. Orellana Zabalza** (Guatemala) wished to know why the Secretary-General's report did not provide more detailed statistics on the use of official languages and social networks. He also asked for information on the status of the initiative to produce press releases in languages other than French and English and on whether the option of storing webcast video and multilingual audio recordings within a single file was still being explored.

31. **Mr. Alnaqshabandi** (Iraq) said that the Department should take advantage of the unanimous international support for Iraq in its battle against terrorism to shed more light on the dangers associated

with terrorism, and that it should provide fuller coverage of the ongoing difficulties in Iraq.

32. **Mr. Nasser** (Acting Head of the Department of Public Information) said that, while archiving audio files in all six languages would require additional financial resources and staff with the relevant language skills, his Department would nonetheless investigate that possibility. With regard to the production of multilingual press releases within existing resources, the Group of Friends to be established by the Chair of the Committee on Information would discuss the issue and report back to the Department with suggestions.

33. Given that there was no United Nations information centre in Iraq, the Department's main sources of information on events in the country were the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations country team. The Secretary-General had been outspoken on the issue of terrorism; his recent tweet, "Missiles may kill terrorists. But good governance kills terrorism" had been particularly well received, and every effort had been made to disseminate information through local, traditional and social media. The United Nations would continue to cooperate with the Iraqi authorities to promote good governance and tackle the scourge of terrorism as a matter of priority.

34. **Mr. Sinhaseni** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that ASEAN had always valued the important contribution of the Department of Public Information to global awareness and understanding of the United Nations. The Department had a duty to discharge its responsibilities with professional integrity and with due regard to the needs of its clients, the Member States. He welcomed the Secretary-General's report (A/69/310), which highlighted the Department's communication campaigns on a number of important issues, as well as its use of both traditional and new media to enhance the Organization's accessibility and visibility. He also noted with appreciation the report of the Committee on Information (A/69/21), and commended in particular the progress of the United Nations Academic Impact initiative in promoting the work of the Organization among young people around the world.

35. The best way to enhance the Organization's relevance was by making its work known to the general public. ASEAN thus encouraged the

Department to continue its commendable and indispensable outreach activities, and supported its efforts to use a variety of social media platforms in order to reach a wider audience much faster. Nevertheless, social media could be harmful when used to disseminate intolerance, hatred and extremism. In that regard, the Department should take care to report events accurately and should continue to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance.

36. Not all countries had access to modern ICTs, and individuals with limited access to information often suffered from marginalization, social exclusion and lack of opportunity. ASEAN therefore called upon those countries with advanced ICTs to provide assistance to developing countries to help bridge the digital divide. There was also a linguistic divide, as a large proportion of the world population did not speak one of the official languages of the United Nations and relied primarily on national governments for information on the United Nations. ASEAN therefore encouraged Member States to promote the work of the Organization by disseminating information in local languages.

37. Given that peacekeeping was an important and well-respected function of the Organization, he welcomed the collaboration of the Department of Public Information with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs on initiatives such as the communications workshop for information officers of peacekeeping operations, held in May 2014, and the visits by Department of Public Information staff to the peacekeeping missions in Haiti, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. The Department should also highlight the actions taken by the United Nations and Member States for the pacific settlement of international disputes.

38. The commemoration of the Organization's seventieth anniversary in 2015 would offer a valuable opportunity to enhance understanding of its aims and achievements. That year would also usher in the ASEAN Community, which would use ICTs to forge a stronger sense of ASEAN unity and identity. The 2013 midterm review of the Association's master plan on ICTs had shown that two thirds of its targets had been met and that the countries were on track to meet the remaining targets by 2015. In August 2014, ASEAN had held a seminar, in collaboration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), on ICT

accessibility and assistive technologies for ensuring social equity.

39. Speaking as the representative of Thailand, he said that his Government's ICT strategy was geared to harnessing such technologies in order to build a better future for the country in six areas: quality of life; education; business and industry; energy and environment; entrepreneurship; and creative industries.

40. **Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), said that public information activities should fully respect international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and should be geared to promoting peace, cooperation and solidarity among peoples through sustainable economic, social and environmental development. CELAC appreciated the efforts of the Department of Public Information to raise public awareness of the Organization's work. It welcomed the continued live webcasts of United Nations meetings in the six official languages and called on the Department and the Secretariat to ensure that the principle of multilingualism was similarly upheld in relation to all information concerning the work of the principal organs of the United Nations. The Committee on Information, meanwhile, had a key role to play in establishing a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding.

41. In an evolving world, new methods were needed to ensure the distribution of information to all, without discrimination. While electronic communications were a fast, effective and interactive method of conveying information, the widening digital divide between developed and developing countries remained a matter of concern; the United Nations must therefore not neglect traditional media, which were the main sources of information for most developing countries.

42. He called on the Secretary-General and the Department of Public Information to provide additional support to the United Nations information centres, which were crucial for spreading the Organization's message, and to increase cooperation with other United Nations entities.

43. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press were vital to any democratic society and must be exercised responsibly, in line with the relevant national legislation and United Nations instruments. Radio

frequencies must be used in the public interest and in accordance with the principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. CELAC rejected the use of ICTs in contravention of those principles, in particular State sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs.

44. As multilingualism was inherent to the existence of the United Nations, the Organization must disseminate information in as many languages as possible, including Portuguese and indigenous languages. It was therefore a matter of great concern that press releases could not be produced in languages other than English and French without additional cost. For that reason, the draft resolution on questions relating to information (A/69/21, chap. IV) reiterated the request for the delivery of press releases in the six official languages by means of creative solutions, at no extra cost, and in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Moreover, equal respect and parity for all the official languages must be achieved, and the financial and human resources of the Department should be more evenly distributed among them, in particular in relation to the United Nations website and social media.

45. CELAC welcomed the creation of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations and would continue to focus on the application of multilingualism in all the Organization's information activities. Although ICT platforms were developing more and more quickly, millions of people were still excluded from that process. Conveying the United Nations message using a combination of modern and traditional methods remained a major challenge. CELAC would continue to work towards that goal on the basis of full observance of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

46. **Mr. Charles** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), commended the Department of Public Information for its continued efforts to disseminate information on the United Nations and its activities through the use of appropriate technology, languages and techniques. Particular praise was due for its outreach work on the post-2015 development agenda, in which universal participation was crucial.

47. The Community welcomed efforts to improve multilingualism in United Nations communications, including the webcasting of meetings with the

appropriate interpretation available and the use of social media in all six official languages, as well as the work of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth in promoting youth participation in the United Nations system.

48. Partnerships should be established to improve communications infrastructure in developing countries, where traditional media remained the principal source of information. Press releases should be issued for meetings not covered by summary records as a means of maintaining the Organization's transparency, accountability and institutional memory.

49. CARICOM reaffirmed its support for the work of the United Nations information centres. The centre serving the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, located in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, was collaborating with partners in government, the media and civil society to reach as wide an audience as possible. In 2013 and 2014, the centre had sent staff members to work with stakeholders on the ground to build its network, provide training and strengthen collaboration with other United Nations offices. It had also disseminated information and delivered technical support to promote United Nations campaigns and observances such as the International Day of Peace, the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust and the preparations for the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

50. CARICOM would continue to mobilize support for the centre. It was concerned, however, that the post of Director of the centre had been vacant since 2011. The Community questioned whether the centre for the Caribbean region was being given the same priority as other centres and called for a speedy resolution to the situation.

51. The Community expressed appreciation to the Department of Public Information for its outstanding organization of activities to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and for its efforts to advance the construction of the permanent memorial at Headquarters. In particular, CARICOM welcomed the decision to hold such commemorative activities throughout the year and not only during the week of 25 March.

52. It was essential to continue to provide information on the prevention and control of

non-communicable diseases and the actions taken by the international community to reduce the prevalence of such diseases. CARICOM also welcomed the Department's efforts to raise awareness of the Ebola virus. It applauded the Department's improved outreach and would continue to support its work in the run-up to the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations.

53. **Mr. Estreme** (Argentina), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Spanish, said that the growing interest of Spanish-speaking peoples in the work of the United Nations had prompted the foundation of the Group, based on the shared conviction that strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and such a group would benefit the Organization's ideals, purposes and principles. All those who considered that languages played a central role in promoting understanding, tolerance and respect for cultural diversity, and believed in multilingualism as a guiding principle of the Organization's activities, were welcome to be observers of the Group of Friends of Spanish.

54. Through the combined use of new technologies and traditional communication media, the Department of Public Information and, in the Spanish-speaking world, the United Nations information centres conveyed the reality of the Organization to a growing audience in the cause of peace, cooperation and solidarity between peoples.

55. The Group commended the work of the Department of Public Information to improve the United Nations website, which was receiving an ever-increasing volume of traffic in all languages. It was concerned, however, that parity among the six official languages was not always observed on the website; all new content for the website should respect the principle of multilingualism, in line with the Department's mandate from the General Assembly. That concern was even greater in view of the growing popularity of the Spanish-language portion of the website, which, according to figures provided by the Department at the request of the Group ([A/68/935](#)), had once again ranked second only to English in volume of traffic in October 2013, with 22 per cent of the total number of visits, compared with 64 per cent for English. Future reports of the Secretary-General should always contain relevant statistics on website traffic for the various languages so as to ensure

transparency and facilitate the design of language-specific initiatives.

56. Members of the Group of Friends of Spanish were encouraged by the fact that the draft resolution on questions relating to information ([A/69/21](#), chap. IV), like General Assembly resolution 67/292, emphasized the Secretariat's responsibility to mainstream multilingualism in all its communication and information activities, within existing resources and on an equitable basis. Thus, while resources for implementing linguistic parity remained scarce, they would at least be allocated equitably among the six official languages. The Department had yet to comply with the Assembly's request that it should deliver daily press releases in all six official languages by means of creative solutions and in a cost-neutral manner. The Group of Friends of Spanish stood ready to provide assistance in that regard and reiterated that resource constraints could not justify the unequal treatment of the six official languages.

57. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that he welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts to ensure an integrated approach to outreach activities on the priority issues on the Organization's agenda. A system-wide strategic framework for information and communication was particularly important in view of the challenges the Department faced in building coherence, consistency and convergence in the many interrelated processes leading up to and beyond 2015. Close collaboration between the Department and the Executive Office of the Secretary-General through the United Nations Communications Group was key, especially in view of the competitive and noisy development landscape, in which many voices sought to be heard.

58. In light of the major challenges facing the international community, it was more important than ever to reach the right audience, and the use of social media was essential to that end. Since information should be accessible to everyone, the European Union and its member States attached great importance to the dissemination of information in all the official languages of the United Nations. It was necessary to coordinate the Organization's efforts on various social

media platforms, to improve the coherence of its message across platforms and languages and to redress disparities in the use of the various languages.

59. The effective and cost-neutral integration of multilingualism in all the Secretariat's communication and information activities was key for the European Union and its member States. Multilingualism was essential for ensuring not only accountability and transparency in United Nations activities, but also their ownership and sustainability.

60. He welcomed the thematic campaigns being conducted by the Department of Public Information on the post-2015 development agenda and other priority issues, such as climate change. The work of the Department and its information centres was of great value for ensuring that all stakeholders, including civil society and NGOs, were kept informed and could participate. He also welcomed the Department's work in keeping the public informed of the United Nations response to crisis situations in specific countries and to issues such as the Ebola and HIV/AIDS epidemics, peacekeeping and development. Human rights issues should also be given priority on an ongoing basis. As always, the European Union and its member States were prepared to support the United Nations in its public diplomacy efforts.

61. **Mr. Forés Rodríguez** (Cuba), recognizing the vital work of the Committee on Information in raising awareness of the work of the United Nations and furthering peace and development, said that ICTs and social networks had great potential to widen the Organization's audience. However, his delegation was increasingly concerned about the digital divide that excluded countries of the South from the opportunities and advantages offered by information technologies. The Department must continue to make use of traditional media, which were an essential source of information for developing countries and were irreplaceable methods of reaching the widest possible audience and protecting the world's cultural diversity. In several African countries, for example, radio had been a vital means of reaching affected and at-risk populations during the Ebola outbreak. Furthermore, the Member States must be consulted regarding the Organization's strategy and guidelines for its presence on social media.

62. Cuba acknowledged the efforts made by the Committee on Information to promote multilingualism

and parity among the six official languages, with the support of Member States and the Group of Friends of Spanish, and welcomed the announcement in the Secretary-General's report ([A/AC.198/2014/3](#)) that the Department of Public Information would start issuing press releases in Spanish by redistributing the resources currently available only for English and French. At the same time, a creative strategy must be developed to ensure that daily press releases were issued in the six official languages. Cuba also deemed it important for the Department to inform the public about nuclear disarmament initiatives, such as the first-ever International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, commemorated on 26 September 2014, as well as about the Organization's work on decolonization.

63. The Heads of State and Government of CELAC, at their 2014 summit meeting in Havana, had declared Latin America and the Caribbean to be a zone of peace, with the aim of fostering tolerance and friendly relations among themselves and with other nations. Such efforts were endangered by the continued radio and television aggression to which Cuba was subjected by the United States, whose ultimate aim had always been to subvert the political, social and economic order chosen by the sovereign Cuban people in full exercise of their right to self-determination. Those broadcasts violated ITU regulations and the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, attempts had been made to use social networks to subvert and destabilize Cuba, as in the case of the ZunZuneo network. ITU recommendations also addressed the problem of unsolicited e-mail messages (spam), also referred to in paragraph 37 of the Declaration of Principles adopted at the World Summit on the Information Society. Such attacks were in breach of the ITU Constitution, under which ICTs must be used to facilitate peaceful relations and international cooperation.

64. **Mr. Alday González** (Mexico) said that Mexico recognized the efforts of the Department of Public Information, particularly its Spanish-language radio, television and News Centre staff, to do more with increasingly scarce resources. The Department's proactive efforts to incorporate new technologies and its entry into the social media sphere opened new avenues to build support for the Organization's activities. However, it must not lose sight of the fact that most of the world's population relied on traditional

media for information on the United Nations. Concerned about the increasing digital divide between developed and developing countries, Mexico called on all stakeholders to help reduce it, in line with the Millennium Development Goals. Equal access to new technologies could drive national prosperity and offer better economic opportunities to individuals.

65. Given the importance of parity among the six official languages in the Organization's media and communication products, more real-time information should be made available in Spanish, the second most commonly spoken language in the world and the second most used for webpage visits and social networks. As the world's most populous Spanish-speaking country, Mexico stood ready to help identify and implement solutions to enhance the efforts of the Group of Friends of Spanish, established by Argentina.

66. As the Organization's seventieth anniversary drew near, the Department of Public Information should strengthen coordination in the development of outreach plans and messages on important development and climate issues and on United Nations crisis management and conflict resolution mechanisms. It was also vital for the Department to participate, where relevant, in the planning and deployment of peacekeeping and special political missions. Such coordination was indispensable for raising awareness and managing the expectations surrounding United Nations missions; to that end, it would be desirable for missions to have duly trained public information staff.

67. His delegation hoped that the Department would strengthen its commitment to developing a culture of evaluation so as to improve the effectiveness of its products and activities, while enhancing coordination with the Offices of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General and of the President of the General Assembly to ensure the coherence and timeliness of the Organization's messages.

68. **Mr. Vidal** (Brazil) said that the international community had experienced a revolution in how it communicated and obtained information. The United Nations currently had an official Facebook page with more than 1.5 million followers and a significant presence on other social media, such as Twitter and YouTube. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the world population still lacked Internet access. In Africa, only 19 per cent of the population used the Internet. Thus, traditional means of communication should not fail to

receive attention and resources from the Department of Public Information.

69. Radio broadcasting was an essential means of reaching those living in remote or rural areas. Initiatives such as the partnership between United Nations Radio and the AudioNow platform should be supported and further developed. That initiative allowed people without Internet access to call a domestic telephone number and have free access to United Nations Radio broadcasts in eight different languages, including Portuguese. Radio broadcasts also played a peacebuilding role in societies emerging from conflict.

70. His Government supported the United Nations information centres, especially the one located in Brazil. In the last few years, that centre had become a major source of information about the United Nations in Portuguese, particularly on the Internet. Its website had recorded a total of 1.71 million visitors and almost 4 million views in the first eight months of 2014. The official United Nations Facebook page in Portuguese, which was maintained by that centre, had recorded 70 million views over the same period and currently had more followers than the official United Nations pages in French, Arabic and Russian. Those data confirmed the importance of the Portuguese language and the need to improve multilingualism within the United Nations. Portuguese was the most widely spoken language in the southern hemisphere.

71. He encouraged the Department to further develop and improve initiatives supporting multilingualism and guaranteeing the dissemination of the principles and work of the United Nations in non-official but widely spoken languages such as Portuguese, Kiswahili, Hindi and Bengali. In the context of the International Decade for People of African Descent, Brazil strongly recommended the Department's engagement in further initiatives on preventing and combating racism, such as its campaign for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and its social media efforts on the prevention of racism in sports. The Department should continue to play a leading role in educating people on the principles of human rights, tolerance and respect. He saluted the Department's coverage of the 2014 events on indigenous peoples' issues.

72. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Committee on Information and the Department of

Public Information were 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 such as extremism and terrorism 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. His 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. The United Nations must take care to use only trusted, impartial, non-politicized information sources.

73. He commended the work of journalists who put their lives at risk to impartially report the facts, particularly in areas of terrorist activity, and denounced the targeting of such journalists, in particular the abominable actions of ISIL. His delegation rejected the description of terrorist groups as “armed resistance” by the spokesperson of the Secretary-General and other prominent United Nations representatives, including the description of the Al-Nusra Front, which was classified by the Security Council as a terrorist group linked to Al-Qaida, as “Syrian armed resistance”.

74. The special information programme on the question of Palestine must be strengthened, given Israel’s ongoing human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including the apartheid wall, the desecration and destruction of Islamic and Christian holy sites and increasing settlement activity. The Department of Public Information must also achieve parity among the official languages of the United Nations and remedy the deficiencies of the Arabic-language website. In addition, the Department could play an important role in encouraging dialogue and building understanding among cultures and peoples.

75. Freedom of expression was a universal right which must be protected but must under no circumstances be used to attack the beliefs, culture or holy sites of others. His delegation called for enhanced cooperation with the Department in the interest of the Organization’s objectives, in particular ending colonialism and all forms of foreign occupation, combating extremism and terrorism, tackling poverty and achieving sustainable development.

76. **Mr. Bitton** (Israel) said that 2015 would mark the tenth anniversary of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme. The Permanent Mission of Israel had been honoured to participate in the 2014 event on the theme “Learning about the Holocaust through the Arts”, which had brought together renowned artists and teachers and students to illustrate the depths of the Holocaust through dance, film, literature and music. Israel applauded that programme for initiating a wide range of activities at United Nations Headquarters and around the world. It trusted that the programme would continue to be allocated sufficient resources to maintain and enhance the scope of its important activities.

77. Israel continued to contribute to the Department’s thematic events seeking to inform, educate and inspire. Earlier in 2014, Israel had partnered with the Department to organize a special observance of World Autism Awareness Day. Israel attached great importance to such events and hoped to cooperate further with the Department and other Member States in the future.

78. Israel welcomed the Department’s open-minded approach to embracing new communication technologies such as Facebook and Twitter with a view to reaching new and young global audiences. His delegation also applauded the Department’s constructive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders and continued efforts to advance innovative partnerships and programmes.

79. Israel remained concerned about the Department’s special information programme on the question of Palestine, which focused on one specific conflict and, since its inception, had generated a narrative that was biased, unconstructive and misleading. Given the one-sided mandate which had established that programme, Israeli government officials would continue to refrain from participating in the programme’s seminars until a more balanced approach was adopted. He reiterated that Israel was willing to engage in the formulation of a more constructive and balanced resolution to mandate future activities. Such a resolution must aim to promote peace education, tolerance, mutual understanding and the prevention of incitement.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.