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Chair: Mr. Medan (Vice-Chair) (Croatia)

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In the absence of Mr. Bowler (Malawi), Mr. Medan (Croatia), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 58: Questions relating to information
(continued) (A/70/21 and A/70/220)

1. **Mr. Htut** (Myanmar) said that his Government had always valued the important contribution of the Department of Public Information in promoting awareness of the work of the United Nations, as well as the role of the Committee on Information in overseeing the United Nations public information policies and activities and making policy recommendations to the General Assembly. The report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/70/220) reviewed the Department's successful information campaigns in areas such as the Sustainable Development Goals, disarmament and peacekeeping operations, and the report of the Committee on Information (A/70/21) had focused on multilingualism, bridging the digital divide and strategic communications services.

2. United Nations Academic Impact, an initiative by which the Department enlisted academic institutions to teach young people about the work of the United Nations, had been working especially well. The Department's outreach activities relating to the three pillars of the Organization — peace and security, human rights and development — were also excellent and it should do even more to promote a positive public image of the United Nations.

3. Myanmar had celebrated United Nations Day on 24 October with a variety of cultural activities and events, some involving young people and all attended by the country's leadership. 2015 marked both the seventieth Anniversary of the Organization's founding and the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, and his delegation encouraged the Department in its Anniversary preparations to highlight the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The Department did well to use social media platforms to complement its use of traditional media but those same social media had often conveyed intolerance, hatred and extremist teachings. The Department was therefore urged to give careful attention to accurate reporting of events and to underscore interreligious and intercultural tolerance in order to counter the spread of extremism. Countries

without access to modern information and communications technology were marginalized. Developed countries with advanced technology should help developing countries to bridge the digital divide. In addition, since so many of the world's people were held back also by a language barrier, Member States were encouraged to assist them by disseminating information about the United Nations in their local languages.

5. The key United Nations function of peacekeeping had attracted much favourable public notice, and the Department must continue to emphasize its vital role in holding the line for peace in situations of armed conflict throughout the world and its commitment to the pacific settlement of disputes. The Department of Public Information, together with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, had held a workshop on communications and training, with presentations on the subject by officers of peacekeeping missions. His Government looked forward to further such collaboration among the three Departments.

6. Amid the relentless and massive global flow of information, the Department of Public Information had a duty to convey an accurate and credible message about the Organization, with professional integrity and due regard to the needs of the developing countries among its clients.

7. **Mr. Zaytsev** (Russian Federation) said that his Government was pleased by the way in which the Department of Public information was publicizing the work of the United Nations. To celebrate the seventieth Anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the Russian Federation, in collaboration with academia and non-governmental organizations, had produced documentaries, articles, interviews and a special Anniversary stamp; it had had a United Nations fact book translated into Russian, and had lit up iconic monuments in blue to mark the occasion.

8. At the United Nations, the Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit was to be complimented for its work with journalists who had attended the high-level general debate at the current session of the General Assembly. His Government called for full United Nations observance of the principle of multilingualism, set out in many Assembly resolutions, which meant parity among the six official languages at meetings and in documentation.

9. He drew attention to the pressure being brought to bear on the mass media by some European countries, as well as their restrictions on freedom of the press and their violations of the rights of journalists, even including attempts on their lives. Some Governments had campaigned against the transmission of Russian television channels under false pretexts, while many Russian journalists were on persona-non-grata lists. His delegation condemned also the aggressive spreading of disinformation: his Government's anti-terrorist campaign in Syria had been thus targeted, despite the fact that the operations complied with international law. Similarly, untrue claims had been made about a general lack of security, infrastructural unpreparedness, and discrimination against certain groups of athletes at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

10. **Mr. Shamsi** (Libya) said that the Department of Public Information played an important role in raising awareness of the purposes of the United Nations, especially with regard to international peace and security. His delegation welcomed its recent collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, as well as its reliance on the latest technological developments in its work.

11. All types of media should be used to disseminate information. Audiovisual and print media were gaining in importance because they reached a wide audience and conveyed knowledge that had an impact on people's conduct. It was the responsibility of the Department and the Committee on Information to call attention to contemporary issues and broaden the public's understanding of them. Media content was highly significant, as peace began in people's minds. It was important to advocate dialogue and renounce prejudice, hatred and extremism in accordance with international law and humanitarian law, in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

12. United Nations reform was also an important topic for the Department, along with poverty, energy, the environment, peacebuilding and peacekeeping, terrorism and refugees. Its Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine should be singled out for excellence, as it had shed light on the suffering of the Palestinian people, the inhumane Israeli practices and occupation, the blockade of Gaza and the attacks on Palestinian civilians. His Government paid tribute to all efforts to build peace

and highlight human rights principles through the media.

13. **Ms. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that her Government encouraged the Department of Public Information in its efforts to create a more positive profile for the United Nations. The Department's vital role was a reflection of the importance of the United Nations in international affairs, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, disarmament, security, human rights, sustainable development and climate change. Sri Lanka fully supported the Department's outreach efforts, its dissemination of United Nations goals and values and its promotion of awareness of international issues. The Department was to be commended for expanding information in official and non-official languages, through different media, by building and strengthening a network of United Nations information centres, and by its collaboration with local media, the private sector, academia and also civil society, with which in particular it should strengthen its partnership.

14. One challenge the Department faced was to assist people from developing nations in the poorest areas of the world with weak infrastructures and limited Internet access. The Department must consider mobilizing resources for such areas in need. One example would be to increase the number of scholarships given to people working in public and private media in developing countries. In addition, the Department could improve the accessibility of information by using local languages on the United Nations websites. There had been a long-felt need for expanded coverage in more languages, particularly in Asia.

15. At the same time, it was important for the United Nations to continue using traditional media, as there remained a digital divide between developed and developing countries. The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society drafted ten years previously had represented a global commitment to bridging the digital divide and to a model of open, inclusive and transparent Internet governance. Although Internet penetration had grown from about 15 per cent of the global population in 2005 to over 40 per cent — with broadband becoming increasingly affordable — much work remained to be done. For her Government, access to high-quality Internet — in the form of free Wi-Fi — was a pre-requisite for freedom of expression and was a right of citizens.

16. As a multi-ethnic society, Sri Lanka had taken the lead also in multilingual Internet initiatives. Globally, however, there were billions more to reach. Continued investment and targeted capacity-building would enable the United Nations message to reach the remotest areas of the world in an inclusive and understandable way. People needed to feel that it was their United Nations speaking on their behalf, and multilingualism and language parity were a significant part of achieving accountability, transparency, ownership and sustainability.

17. As a troop-contributing country, Sri Lanka recognized the importance of disseminating information on United Nations peacekeeping operations, and welcomed the cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

18. Her delegation was concerned, however, about the politicization of public information and the possible inappropriate use of information and communications technology to violate human rights and interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign States in a destabilizing way. State and non-State actors were able to harness technology for undemocratic purposes that violated the values of the United Nations by shutting down websites and inciting violence. The media continued to suffer from having journalists imprisoned or killed, printing presses destroyed and licenses withdrawn. Those threats, and the perpetuation of impunity for them, could lead to self-censorship by the media out of fear.

19. The right to free speech was universal, and would be meaningless if it covered only politically and socially acceptable views. Her delegation welcomed draft resolution A contained in the report of the Committee on Information that urged all countries to reaffirm their commitment to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information; and to ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them. Her delegation had endorsed the proclamation of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists in resolution 68/163 and also welcomed the efforts of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in that regard.

20. In January 2015, Sri Lanka had elected a new Administration committed to democratic principles and

to conducting urgent independent inquiries into the disappearance and murder of journalists, activists and other missing persons targeted during the previous Administration. The new Government had pledged to implement a series of reforms, including the appointment of a civilian at the helm of the ministry overseeing the police and the establishment of independent public service commissions, including a police commission.

21. **Mr. Morales López** (Colombia), expressing appreciation for the work of the Department of Public Information, its United Nations television and radio teams, library team and Spanish news centre, said that the United Nations was recognized for its universality and legitimacy in part because of such dissemination of its decisions and actions worldwide. Both the Department and the Committee on Information had a special responsibility to publicize the person-centred 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to the private sector, civil society and academia.

22. Despite the constant emergence of new technologies, it should not be forgotten that they were limited or non-existent in many developing countries. To ensure non-discriminatory and equal access to information for all, it was imperative to maintain and strengthen traditional communications media such as radio, television and the press. His Government was none the less a strong advocate of modern technologies to promote development, and therefore saw the need to increase cooperation and technical assistance to bridge the digital divide. The work of the United Nations information centres was key in that regard, and their equipment and systems must be strengthened to enable them to achieve sustainable, measurable results. The United Nations Information Centre in Bogotá had in the course of the year focused on publicizing the Sustainable Development Goals, the Organization's seventieth Anniversary and the progress of Colombia's peace process, and had organized the two largest Model United Nations in Latin America.

23. Given the importance of multilingualism, his Government welcomed the publication of the *Journal of the United Nations* in the official languages, and was advocating the distribution also of the daily press releases in all six languages, as well as more substantive content on the websites. It was necessary to bring innovation to the United Nations communications strategies and to do so creatively and collaboratively within existing resources, without

slighting any one language. While his delegation welcomed the increased traffic on the United Nations website, it shared the concern of the Group of Friends of Spanish — the second most consulted language on the website following English — about how the principle of linguistic parity was being observed, given the linguistic unevenness of the content published. There must be greater balance in what was produced in the six official languages, and the Department of Public Information must coordinate with other departments involved to adjust the website content and the allocation of resources accordingly.

24. Also, it was important to return in future Secretariat reports to the in-depth statistical information that had previously been included regarding the comparative use of all the official languages, since it was a useful basis for deciding what information to disseminate. The Department of Public Information should, moreover, coordinate with other United Nations agencies and programmes to avoid any duplication.

25. **Mr. Sliman** (Tunisia) said that the launch of the United Nations global survey, My World 2015, to allow the world's citizens to express their views online prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflected a collective approach and the new participatory enterprise pursued by the United Nations as it used technology as an essential tool in communication. The role of the Department of Public Information was of the utmost importance in fostering understanding of the achievements and goals of the United Nations by providing impartial, accurate and timely information, and it was in fact doing commendable work.

26. The Department was successfully engaging with the public and increasing its interaction with civil society, schools and universities to foster dialogue and raise awareness of challenges such as conflicts, terrorism, climate change, food security and pandemics. To make the message of the United Nations more universal, additional efforts should be made to expand multilingual content. Multilingualism was an indispensable tool for transparent, accountable and sustainable communication, and was also vital in consolidating the multilateral system.

27. His Government applauded the effectiveness of the Department's Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine in highlighting the situation

of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation, and called for similar coverage to be stepped up in a time of escalating tensions and continued Israeli violations of international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions.

28. **Mr. Kuno** (Japan) said that his delegation congratulated the Department of Public Information on its excellent work in publicizing the priorities of the Organization, and in organizing celebrations for the seventieth Anniversary of its founding, in which Japan had participated by illuminating several major monuments in blue. As the face of the United Nations in Japan, the United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo had, furthermore, put out information on matters such as climate change and international peace and security and, in conjunction with the Department and his Government, had digitized and made available on the Internet historic videos from the United Nations archives. Japan continued to support the important mission of the Tokyo Centre in the form of a voluntary contribution, and called on the Department of Public Information to continue its own efforts to maintain the valuable global presence of the network of United Nations information centres.

29. At Headquarters, Japan had worked with the Department to ensure the return of the Peace Bell — donated to the United Nations by Japan in 1954 — to its original location adjacent to the General Assembly Hall, in the newly restored Japanese Garden. To commemorate its return and in celebration of the International Day of Peace, a Peace Bell re-inauguration ceremony had been held in May 2015, which Japan hoped would again become an annual occurrence.

30. His delegation was pleased to report that 31 Japanese universities were participating in United Nations Academic Impact, intended to build stronger connections between the Organization, institutions of higher learning and the young people who were the future of the Organization. Japan looked forward to hearing from the Secretariat about the progress of that valuable initiative.

31. It was important for the Department to fulfil its global mandate by rationalizing resources strategically and carrying out activities in a cost-neutral manner, thus improving its efficiency and transparency.

32. **Mr. Prasad** (India) said that, after the active role the Department of Public Information had assumed in

highlighting the importance of the Millennium Development Goals and — more recently — the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, it must now maintain focus on those more ambitious and complex objectives. Also praiseworthy had been the Department's key role in the preparations for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris in 2015.

33. His delegation welcomed the Department's creation of a Victims of Terrorism Support Portal for the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force in the six official languages. As a victim of externally-inspired terrorism for over two decades, India appreciated the initiative and urged the Department to use the Portal creatively to reach other communities worldwide. Against the background of the threat of violent extremism in the world, it also wholeheartedly supported the Department's involvement in the ongoing Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme, the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda.

34. The Department's extensive use of the network of United Nations information centres to hold simultaneous online events and briefings was to be applauded, particularly to promote action on press freedom, family planning and environmental issues. The United Nations Information Centre in New Delhi had collaborated with NGOs in a tree-planting initiative in Srinagar, as part of the laudable goal to plant a million trees in the next five years.

35. While impressed by the dramatic growth of a United Nations media presence across multiple platforms in all the official languages, which put across the heartening message of the Organization's outstanding work in so many areas of social and economic development throughout the world, India urged the Department to focus attention also on major languages outside the six official languages. South Asia, with its multiplicity of languages, was a case in point. India was a world leader in smart-phone Internet use, and government programmes such as "Digital India" would provide access to over 250 million Hindi speakers and more than 50 million speakers for each of the other major Indian languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Bengali and Punjabi — with the latter two also

spoken by 160 million people in Bangladesh and 120 million in Pakistan, respectively.

36. The communications workshops organized by the Department for senior public information officers from peacekeeping missions were valuable, because it was vital to project correctly to the local communities and the international audience at large the tremendous peacebuilding work done by the United Nations. His delegation supported the Department's continuous engagement with peacekeeping through field visits to missions and involvement in the planning of their public information components.

37. Under the United Nations Academic Impact initiative, a global youth forum and an international essay-writing competition had been held — with three Arabic-language students from Indian universities among the 60 final winners out of 4000 applicants. His delegation would be happy if the Department engaged with more Indian universities under that initiative. In the current media-driven age, The Department of Public Information was one of the key arms of the United Nations and should be supported accordingly.

38. **Mr. Pyvovarov** (Ukraine), noting that clear, well-conceived and properly targeted information was a prerequisite for surmounting the political, economic and humanitarian crises with which the United Nations was grappling, said that his delegation applauded the expeditious way in which the Department of Public Information disseminated information about the huge range of United Nations activities, and the professionalism of the media support it provided, which was much appreciated in academic, press and public circles in Ukraine. It also noted the fruitful work of the Committee on Information, and strongly endorsed calls to improve multilingualism. The United Nations presence on social media was proof of the Organization's ability to keep up with the latest trends in global information. The role of the United Nations in delivering information was a powerful tool for preventive and public diplomacy, as well as a method for working with young people and international media.

39. Welcome improvements had made the United Nations website an important web resource for the public, but many websites of United Nations committees, peacekeeping missions and subsidiary bodies were out of date and should be modernized. The Department should reinforce staffing at United Nations

Radio, which was well placed to spread United Nations news quickly. The United Nations news centres in the official languages and United Nations Radio were seen as reliable information sources in Ukraine, and it urged their staff to focus even more on analysis and interviews with United Nations officials. The Secretariat services that organized interviews at Headquarters, however, were excessively bureaucratic, and should improve procedures for foreign journalists to interview senior United Nations officials.

40. Since a certain neighbouring country had occupied Crimea, his Government had become only too aware of how information at the State level could be used to bring chaos to other nations rather than to build peace, reconciliation and democratic values. That same country had used disinformation and a massive international propaganda campaign to brainwash citizens in an attempt to expand its territory. Such a “hybrid war” involving State-controlled media and armed groups with no insignia was a threat to United Nations values. The Committee and other United Nations bodies should definitely react rapidly to all such attempts to falsify information and to use it as a tool for fuelling regional conflicts. His Government believed that Member States should draft an international legal document prohibiting international propaganda, with a view to protecting societies from State-led information wars. Information security was a key element in every national security system, and the United Nations should become a beacon for international information security by identifying and holding to account those who engaged in Cold-War practices. With that in mind, his delegation expressed deep gratitude to all the independent international journalists who were bringing the truth of its situation to light.

41. **Mr. Castro Cordoba** (Costa Rica) said that the activities of the Department of Public Information in relation to the seventieth Anniversary of the United Nations, the post-2015 development agenda, education and youth had been particularly noteworthy. In connection with the Anniversary, Costa Rica had created a postmark publicizing it as a symbol of what the Organization represented to the international community.

42. Because freedom of expression and open, transparent and participatory communication were important for democratic coexistence, sustainable development, opportunity and innovation and for

combating corruption, it was imperative for information flows to comply with the rule of law and respect for human rights. Member States, and developing countries in particular, should strengthen the role of traditional media while extending access to new media and information and communications technologies to all population groups — particularly young people and persons with disabilities.

43. Costa Rica believed that it was essential for the United Nations to communicate more effectively and put in place strategic communications services to convey the three pillars of its Charter. The Committee on Information — as policy body — and the Department of Public Information — as strategic, technical and operational body — had improved their cooperation through greater coordination with other United Nations bodies, the use of new technologies, and partnerships with the media, NGOs, academia and civil society. Those efforts should be stepped up.

44. The report of the Secretary-General described the growing use of social media by the United Nations in the various languages in order to reach new audiences. While his delegation firmly endorsed the steps taken to strike a greater balance in the use of the six official languages, much still remained to be done, particularly in terms of achieving linguistic parity on the improved website. Despite repeated calls from Spanish-speaking countries for multilingualism to be implemented, daily press releases were still not being issued in Spanish.

45. **Mr. Krasna** (Israel) said that disseminating information responsibly was crucial because proper information had a beneficial, empowering effect, while misinformation spread lies as truth or fiction as historical fact, did a disservice to worthy causes, and could endanger innocent people. As an example of the positive use of the power of information, his delegation was proud to be among those sponsoring the United Nations observance of World Autism Awareness Day, for it was the correct global stage on which to encourage the employment of autistic persons, whose unique skills could be of value in the economy.

46. It must be recalled that genocidal evil was not limited to any religion, country or ethnic group, and that it was the mission of the United Nations to say “Never again” to the slaughter of nations and communities. The proposed theme for Holocaust remembrance and education in 2016 would be “The Holocaust and Human Dignity”, which tied in with the

seventieth Anniversary of the United Nations, and recalled the Charter affirmation of the dignity and worth of every person and the proclamation in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the right of all to live free from discrimination and to enjoy equal protection under the law.

47. General Assembly resolution 60/7 establishing the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust had also called for educational programmes to teach future generations about the Holocaust. Israel was heartened by the important work of the Department's Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme and the growing audiences it had attracted. Given the untiring United Nations efforts to advance Holocaust remembrance and education, his Government remained confident that the Outreach Programme would continue to receive the resources needed to maintain and enhance the scope of its important activities.

48. Unprecedented levels of anti-Semitism had been witnessed worldwide in 2015, and the United Nations should lead the battle to counter that scourge. Its action to date had been encouraging, with a historic first meeting on anti-Semitism held at the General Assembly in January 2015, at which 50 Member States had issued a joint statement calling for action to eradicate anti-Semitism and welcoming specific plans by the Department of Public Information in that regard. His delegation urged the Department to implement such action.

49. His Government remained deeply concerned about the Department's Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, as its underlying narrative was biased and misleading. No United Nations platform, including social media, should be abused for the dissemination of anti-Israel messages. His delegation urged the Department to work toward consolidating all political media platforms and events under one authority and to strengthen its oversight role to guarantee that all communications lived up to the values of the Organization. Israel would as always be willing to engage in a more constructive and balanced approach to future activities to promote peace education, tolerance, mutual understanding and the prevention of incitement.

50. At the Committee's previous meeting, statements containing unfounded accusations had been made by

the Palestinian representative and delegates from countries with questionable records on press freedom. Young Palestinians were being exposed to television programmes and books that incited hatred and glorified "martyrdom". That very day, two more terror attacks had been perpetrated against citizens of Israel. Earlier that month, a terrorist had even posed as a member of the press corps in order to commit a violent act.

51. Information was a powerful tool that could enable and educate on the one hand, or suppress and incite on the other. Information should convey truth, and the promulgators of information must be the promulgators of truth.

52. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that his delegation appreciated the fine work of the Committee on Information at its latest session, and the work being done by the Department of Public Information as the voice of the United Nations and Coordinator for Multilingualism. While his delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to develop fresh content using new technologies, it was important to give priority to traditional means of communication to avoid injustices attributable to the gap between developed and developing countries.

53. The 63 United Nations information centres were doing an excellent job of conveying the Organization's message to local audiences in their own languages; and their staff and equipment should be bolstered. The United Nations Information Centre in Buenos Aires acted as digital communication focal point for the United Nations system in Argentina and Uruguay, as well as running several Spanish-language websites and conducting important information campaigns, and it had his Government's full support and cooperation.

54. In October 2015, his Government had organized a special seventieth-Anniversary event in Buenos Aires inaugurating a photographic exhibition about Argentina's 70 years in the United Nations; and three iconic sites in the capital had been lit up in blue for the occasion. The Department of Public Information was to be congratulated for its activities relating to the Anniversary and its coverage of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda.

55. As Argentina shared the Department's view about the importance of speaking to people in their own languages, it was extremely supportive of multilingualism as an intrinsic principle of the United

Nations. It had therefore been proud to join the other 19 nations from three continents in the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations, whose charter testified to the commitment of Spanish-speaking States to linguistic parity and to Spanish as an official working language of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. His Government was once again concerned about the absence in the report of the Secretary General of detailed and disaggregated statistics on the use of languages in the Department's various products and services. Such data would allow the Department to identify language-use trends, see what was needed and devise tools to meet the demand in a transparent way.

56. While his delegation welcomed the increased Spanish content on the United Nations website, which in turn attracted more Spanish speakers, it was seriously concerned that there remained far less Spanish content available than English. Spanish was the second most popular language for visiting and searching the United Nations website and social media platforms, accounting for 18 per cent while English represented 61 per cent. Moreover, although the commemoration of the seventieth Anniversary on the website in all six languages was an example to follow, many new pages and products were still produced only in one or two official languages without consideration of the multilingualism mandate from the planning stage. If the additional resources for multilingualism, which had been included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, were in the end not allocated, the Department had to rearrange its priorities in order to meet the linguistic demands of the audiences accessing content.

57. Linguistic parity applied by General Assembly mandate also to daily press releases, which ensured not only instantaneous information but also transparency, accountability and institutional memory, yet they remained available in just two official languages. The Department was currently considering various options for distributing press releases in all six languages at no additional cost; and indeed, according to the principle of linguistic parity, all the official languages were on an equal footing and equally entitled to receive funding. It would not be appropriate to cite budgetary factors for not doing so because the General Assembly had made it clear that the issue should be resolved using an equitable distribution of existing resources within the Department's general budget.

58. His delegation welcomed the progress made in digitization, and that work should continue. The Library staff as well deserved recognition for their training programmes and contacts with depositary libraries. Their work to conserve the archives and heritage of the Organization was an "invisible" task that benefitted all humanity. His delegation pledged its full support to all staff of the Department of Public Information, and thanked them for their openness in responding to concerns from Member States so transparently, efficiently and professionally.

59. **Mr. Giacomelli da Silva** (Brazil) said that his delegation encouraged the Department of Public Information to continue to communicate the Organization's ideals in as many languages as possible, taking into account the world's linguistic diversity and the digital divide among countries. The Department should use a combination of traditional means of communication, such as radio, television and printed material, and new online media such as Facebook and Twitter. Although the Internet should of course be used in publicizing the work of the United Nations, special emphasis should be put on radio broadcasting in the Department's strategic planning. It must be remembered that only 3 billion people were connected to the Internet worldwide, which meant that 60 per cent of the world's population had no access to online content, while 75 per cent of households in developing countries did have access to radio.

60. His Government reaffirmed its commitment to multilingualism and the principle of parity among the six official languages, which should be treated equitably in all activities of the Department of Public Information. The six official languages were spoken by 40 per cent of the global population. In 2014, the United Nations had used 23 local languages in its information products, with Portuguese and Bengali having the most speakers. Portuguese was in fact the most widely spoken language in the southern hemisphere, and was used by 250 million people worldwide. His Government was a firm supporter of the work of United Nations Radio in Portuguese, which it broadcast to more than 16 countries, some with significant Portuguese diasporas. It encouraged the Department to expand still further the number of languages it used to disseminate information, so as to include Hindi, Kiswahili and others as well, thus facilitating multilingualism.

61. His delegation underlined the important role of the United Nations information centres. Created in 1947, the United Nations Information Centre in Rio was the main source of information about the United Nations in Portuguese, reaching audiences in Brazil, Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. The United Nations web portal in Portuguese, maintained by the Rio Centre, had received over 5 million page views in 2014, and an average of 400,000 page views per month in 2015. The website of the Centre itself had received over 2.5 million visitors in 2014 — representing a third of all online visits to United Nations information centres — , its Facebook page had received more than 415,000 “likes” and its Twitter feed had over 200,000 “followers”. The United Nations Facebook page in Portuguese was the second largest in the world.

62. His Government welcomed the increasing involvement of civil society in the Organization, and official Brazilian delegations had included civil society representatives at events on indigenous people, women’s rights, youth, population and development. His delegation therefore encouraged the Department of Public Information to continue to develop activities with the academic community and NGOs.

63. His delegation welcomed the communication campaigns such as those for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the International Decade for People of African Descent and the International Day Against Nuclear Tests. The Department had also made commendable efforts to publicize the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda and the seventieth Anniversary of the Organization.

64. **Ms. Pucarinho** (Portugal) said that the work of the Department of Public Information played a fundamental role in fulfilling the purposes of the United Nations by reflecting the principles of the Charter, increasing transparency and raising the profile and impact of the Organization’s activities.

65. Her Government encouraged the emphasis on multilingualism, as well as the use of both traditional and new means of communication. The United Nations information centres, as multilingual platforms for disseminating United Nations activities, were doing strategic work. Portugal commended the work of the United Nations Regional Information Centre for

Western Europe, which operated in 13 languages including Portuguese, as well as that of the United Nations Information Centre in Rio. She welcomed the decision to establish a United Nations information centre in Africa operating in Portuguese, and said that it was overdue given the number of Portuguese speakers there.

66. The Portuguese news centre of United Nations Radio was broadcasting daily on all continents. In 2014, it had forged 20 new partnerships, including one with television networks in Portugal. Her delegation urged the Department to create synergies between the Portuguese-speaking world and United Nations Radio, and pledged to support such cooperation, one example of which had been the coverage of the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize — with winners from Namibia and Portugal. The Department deserved praise for increasing its Portuguese content, since it was the language of 250 million people across four continents. The news centre made available printed materials from the Secretariat, programmes and specialized agencies. There were also weekly videos on United Nations activities in Portuguese on its Week Ahead and Week in Review programmes. The Secretariat should spare no efforts in reaching out to people worldwide, especially those most affected by United Nations issues. A case in point was the ongoing work to create a full Portuguese-language version of the website for the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau.

67. Portugal had celebrated the seventieth Anniversary of the United Nations in cooperation with representatives of civil society and all United Nations agencies. 2015 had also been the sixtieth anniversary of Portugal’s accession to the United Nations.

68. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation wished to emphasize the importance of the Committee on Information in overseeing the work of the Department of Public Information and guiding it in its policies, programmes and activities; and also to stress the Department’s own significant role as the voice of the United Nations as it disseminated information about its activities.

69. However, his delegation believed that the Department should do more to promote a positive image of the United Nations by impartially shedding more light on important issues to help Member States respond in a timely manner. Two such issues were

violent extremism and terrorism. In 2013 his President had called for collective action against those threats, leading to the adoption in the plenary Assembly of the consensus resolution 68/127 on a world against violence and violent extremism. That had clearly been a timely and valid initiative in view of the emergence of Islamic State and other terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. More attention should be paid to the ideas and actions recommended in that resolution and in a 2001 initiative by his Government to promote dialogue among civilizations through the adoption of resolution 55/23. The Department of Public Information should make it part of its agenda to promote those concepts in United Nations activities, as recommended in the resolution 69/96. His delegation appreciated the Department's cooperation with the United Nations Information Centre in Tehran in organizing a seminar on the United Nations and a world against violence and violent extremism.

70. On the question of Palestine, the United Nations had an important responsibility to raise international awareness of the negative consequences of the occupation and embargo there, imprisoning millions of people in their homeland. His delegation applauded the Department for its Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, including the training programme for Palestinian journalists. Also welcome was the ongoing Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists Fellowship Programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries mandated by the General Assembly.

71. The United Nations information centres played an important role in disseminating the various messages of the Organization and enhancing its public image, and therefore their capacity should be strengthened. The allocation of posts to each centre should of course take account of the size of the host country and the number of clients.

72. In Tehran, iconic parts of the cityscape had been lit up in blue in celebration of the seventieth Anniversary of the United Nations. Other activities organized for the occasion had included the screening of a film about the United Nations in the capital and in various other cities and an exhibition of photographs and documents inaugurated by the Deputy Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and his own Government's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs, with 1,200 guests from the

diplomatic corps, civil society, academia and the media.

73. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) said that it was necessary to rectify the current imbalances in the use of the Organization's six official languages in all the activities of the Department of Public Information. That was not merely in order to observe the important principle of language parity, but also to disseminate the message of the United Nations to as wide an audience as possible. Information was crucial in combating extremist thought and ideology, one of the root causes of terrorism. His delegation believed that the Department had a key role to play in countering radical ideology. His Government paid special tribute to the efforts of the United Nations Information Centre in Cairo. Since its establishment in 1949, it had done significant work in providing its services to the region during a particularly challenging point in its history. Egypt encouraged the Department to maintain its efforts to highlight the continuing plight of the Palestinian people. It was pleased that over 400 items of information had been produced in 2014 on the question of Palestine, and would like to see yet more in the future.

74. **Mr. Zabavy** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the proliferation of social networking platforms had not diminished the high level of interest in traditional media such as television and radio, because they were still the main information channels in developing countries. It was important for the United Nations information system to strike a balance between the two — as had been brought out during the general debate at the most recent session of the Committee on Information.

75. The Secretary-General's report had alluded to the role of the Department of Public Information in improving communication in the field during United Nations peacekeeping operations; such communication could serve as an important instrument for rapprochement and pacification. His delegation would like to thank the United Nations for its considerable contributions to his country's post-crisis period. In the context of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI), Peace Radio (or ONUCI-FM) had provided support for the reconciliation process and the peacebuilding campaign through its broadcasts on political, economic, social and health topics. The ONUCI Division of Public Information had also provided valuable training in professionalism and

ethics through its media support, while helping the Government with communication and peace promotion activities during the Presidential campaign and elections.

76. The significant digital divide between developed and developing countries still existed, and more cooperation was needed among Member States and with the United Nations to reduce it. His Government had introduced a massive public Internet-access programme, accompanied by the adoption of a strong legislative and regulatory framework with laws on e-commerce transactions, cybercrime and personal data protection. The State also intended to invest heavily in the field alongside private providers, build a 7000-km national fibre-optic network, provide populations with access to equipment with telephone/computer /Internet connection, and set up 5000 cyber centres in rural and outlying areas for low-income groups.

77. Lastly, he encouraged the Department of Public Information to continue its drive to increase global media coverage of the Organization's noble work.

78. **Mr. Coulibaly** (Burkina Faso) said that his delegation congratulated the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and her team for the excellent work carried out by the Department of Public Information to mark the seventieth Anniversary of the United Nations and to cover the summit on the adoption of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

79. His Government welcomed the use of social media as additional ways for the Department to disseminate information on the United Nations. Such modern means of communication should not be seen as rivals to traditional media, but rather as complementing them. The digital divide between North and South meant, however, that many populations worldwide were unable to benefit from such new developments. For those people, radio, television and the press were extremely important. The widening of the digital divide was a matter of concern. Both the United Nations system and Member States must undertake to give the developing countries more help by sharing modern communications technologies and thus narrowing the gap. Burkina Faso was one such country, and was currently engaged in rolling out digital terrestrial television.

80. His Government welcomed the contribution of the United Nations information centres, particularly

the Information Centre in Ouagadougou, which covered three other countries of the Sahel in addition to his own — Mali, Niger and Chad — and had established partnerships with universities, media associations, civil society organizations and public services for the purposes of information-sharing and capacity-building, thus making itself indispensable.

81. His Government had undertaken root-and-branch reforms to establish freedom of the press and a healthy democracy. It had decriminalized press activities, strengthened the legal framework governing the online, audiovisual and written press, and declared the right of access to administrative information. It was vital for the press to be able to inform, educate and raise awareness.

82. His delegation urged the Department of Public Information to promote harmonious communication through fuller and more equitable use of all six official languages. Improved multilingualism within the United Nations would increase the participation of all States in the work of the Organization. Internal communication should be the force that linked the various United Nations bodies, while external communication should use also languages other than the official ones to convey the message of the Organization.

83. **Mr. Bosah** (Nigeria) said that his Government applauded the strategic communications planning done by the Department of Public Information in support of the United Nations response to Ebola in Africa and cholera in Haiti. It commended the Department's outreach as it worked with member States of the Caribbean Community and the African Union to honour the victims of slavery, and with others to honour the victims of the Holocaust. The Department had also been effective in supporting and raising awareness of the New Partnership for Africa's Development through its Africa Renewal magazine and its website of the same name. The Department was doing fine work in disseminating information on climate change, the post-2015 development agenda, human rights, disarmament and particularly the Organization's recent comprehensive reviews of peace operations.

84. Eight years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 61/266 on promoting international understanding through multilingualism, his delegation called for continued efforts to ensure equitable use of all six official languages of the United Nations. It also encouraged the Department to promote the use of local

languages in its various United Nations information centres and in the United Nations Development Programme country offices. Burkina Faso greatly appreciated the services of the United Nations Information Centre in Lagos, and was committed to building on the Centre's work in the country.

85. As the digital divide remained a problem for developing countries, where information technology was still rudimentary, his delegation reiterated that the use of modern information systems had to be balanced with traditional means of communication to raise awareness there of the work of the United Nations.

86. **Mr. Jaime Calderón** (El Salvador), observing that information in the service of humanity was basic to global decision-making, said that his Government supported the work done by the Department of Public Information to inform the world about the important issues with which the United Nations was dealing, such as the post-2015 development agenda, peace and security, youth and education, human rights, climate change, the question of Palestine, the fight against cholera and Ebola, the crisis in Nepal, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the seventieth Anniversary celebrations.

87. Public information activities should be central to the Organization's strategic management, and a culture of communication and transparency should permeate all levels of the Organization so that the public could be informed in accordance with Charter principles. For maximum transparency, it should be the Department's mission to provide accurate, impartial, broad, balanced, timely, relevant and multilingual information on the tasks and obligations of the United Nations.

88. His Government believed it was necessary to adopt a regulatory framework governing the use of information and communications technologies, and ensuring that Member States did not use them to contravene international law — the latter being a firmly held position in Latin America and the Caribbean. Any steps in that direction should have a well-defined scope and be subject to monitoring in terms of full respect for international law, peaceful settlement of disputes, prohibition of the use or threat of force, respect for self-determination and sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in domestic affairs, observance of all human rights, the national and global rule of law, and democracy.

89. As part of the Group of Friends of Spanish, his delegation underscored the serious obligation to incorporate multilingualism in all communication and

information activities by apportioning existing resources equitably among the official languages. The Department of Public Information must continue working with the Coordinator for Multilingualism on the best practices for fulfilling that responsibility throughout the Secretariat, and the Secretary-General should report on the resulting practical improvements in his next report. His delegation was concerned that the report of the Secretary-General had not included statistics on the number of visits to the website or the social networking sites, or given disaggregated data for each language. Such statistics would permit a more accurate, transparent analysis that would enable informed action to be taken.

90. The Department of Public Information must prioritize its work programme while respecting existing mandates and in line with regulation 5.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, to focus its message and concentrate its efforts better and, as a function of performance management, to match its programmes with the needs of its target audiences — including the linguistic dimension — on the basis of improved feedback and evaluation mechanisms.

91. El Salvador strongly endorsed measures relating to the use of information and multilingualism, such as the establishment of the network of United Nations information centres, the generation of information sources for local communities and the outreach to universities and research institutions through United Nations Academic Impact. However, his delegation was concerned that several countries had been completely left out, and that there was no strategy for building their capacities or helping them to act.

92. Multilingualism and the use of new media platforms required creative solutions for doing more with less. Such solutions should be applied equitably to all the Department's activities when allocating programme budget resources.

93. Access to information was part of access to knowledge and therefore education. All States must continue communicating with each other in order to build a more developed world.

94. **Mr. Forés Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that technological development was not uniform throughout the world, and that the development gap between rich and poor countries had manifold manifestations.

95. There were 781 million adults and 126 million young people affected by illiteracy — with two thirds of those being women — according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. For those people, the messages and information on social networks or the web were incomprehensible. That was why traditional media such as radio were such useful tools for reaching the widest possible audience while protecting cultural diversity. United Nations Radio broadcasts went beyond the six official languages to be understandable to millions of illiterate people.

96. Protecting multilingualism and equal treatment for the six official languages of the United Nations remained crucial factors in disseminating information. It was therefore important for the Secretary-General to include in his annual report to the Committee data regarding website visits that were disaggregated by language. Spanish was the second most widely-used language on the Organization's website and social media pages, and the Group of Friends of Spanish had helped defend the language within the United Nations.

97. Many of the goals of the Charter of the United Nations remained unfulfilled or only partially fulfilled, but they still represented the aspirations of the world's people. The entire United Nations system must strive to realize those aspirations, and the Department of Public Information was no exception. Two of the greatest challenges were climate change and nuclear weapons. The vast majority of States wanted to eliminate nuclear weapons by negotiating a legally binding Convention, as proposed in General Assembly resolution 69/58; and most States also wanted to change consumption and production patterns to halt the irreversible destruction of the environment and its ecosystems. The United Nations information system was in a position to disseminate the arguments for doing so and to create the global awareness of those issues that would give the international community the power to resolve them. Two 2015 events in that context had been the observance of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons on 26 September and the preparatory process for the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be held in Paris in December.

98. The Second Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) had declared the region a zone of peace, as a way of fostering friendly relations and cooperation among its members and with other

States. Those efforts were under threat from the constant radio and television offensives carried out by the United States Government against Cuba, against the will of the Cuban people and in contravention of the Charter and several International Telecommunication Union provisions. Using information to subvert the domestic order of other States, violate their sovereignty and interfere in national affairs was illegal and had been rejected by the international community. His Government hoped that the new stage of bilateral relations initiated in late 2014 to re-establish and eventually normalize diplomatic relations between their two countries would end such aggression and the economic, trade and financial embargoes that had been so damaging for the Cuban people, not least in the sphere of information.

99. His delegation underscored the role of the Committee on Information in establishing a fairer and more effective world information and communication order that would strengthen peace and understanding. Cuba pledged to cooperate with all nations without distinction to realize the founding ideals of the Organization.

100. **Ms. Jazairy** (Algeria) said that while her Government fully supported the Department of Public Information, it thought the Department needed to put more emphasis on issues important to developing countries, such as decolonization, the right to self-determination, the post-2015 development agenda, dialogue among civilizations, the culture of peace, peacekeeping, disarmament and climate change. It endorsed its Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine for it had raised awareness of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

101. The digital divide between developed and developing countries persisted, and the Department should expand its reach by establishing broader contacts with media outlets in the developing countries. Also of concern were the politicization of public information and the misuse of information and communications technologies to interfere in the affairs of sovereign States. Multilingualism should be mainstreamed into all activities to ensure the transparency, accountability, ownership and sustainability of the Department's communications.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.