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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 11th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 18 October 2016, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Drobnjak. . . . . (Croatia)

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

**Agenda Item 58: Questions relating to information**  
(A/71/21, A/71/227, A/71/383 and A/71/383/Add.1)

1. **Mr. Castro Cordoba** (Costa Rica) said that the activities of the Department of Public Information in relation to its support for the United Nations Mission in Colombia, the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers and the first anniversary of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals had been particularly noteworthy. Nevertheless, there remained an urgent need to further disseminate information on the Goals and educate citizens on how to become involved in efforts to implement them.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. According to the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/71/227), the Department had finished updating the informational bulletin on how the United Nations could assist Non-Self-Governing Territories; his delegation would welcome information on when that bulletin, which had been drafted in English, would become available in the Organization's other official languages. 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.

5. **Ms. Alvarado Quezada** (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. 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 in the host country, 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 those efforts. The Department of Public Information should strengthen coordination in the development of outreach plans and messages on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change and the outcomes of the three review processes on peace operations and peacebuilding.

6. Her delegation supported the Department's proactive efforts to incorporate new technologies and its entry into the social media sphere, which 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 and committed to achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda, Mexico called on all stakeholders to make access to new technologies universal.

7. 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 on new realities, successes and lessons learned and remaining challenges. Furthermore, to manage and put into context the expectations surrounding United Nations field presence, missions should have duly trained public information staff. Lastly, she reaffirmed the importance of enhancing coordination among the

Department, the Office of the Spokesperson of the Secretary-General and the President of the General Assembly in order to ensure that the Organization's messages were coherent and timely.

8. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) said that her Government recognized the crucial and evolving role of the Department of Public Information as it benefited from new technologies to maintain the highest level of awareness about the Organization's work, strategies and collective solutions. It valued the Department's strategic approach to capitalize on the latest advances in internet and social media and its contribution to a lively political, economic and social discourse that involved many countries and stakeholders.

9. Her Government also valued the Department's strategic communications services, including the United Nations information centres, which aimed to bring the Organization back to the people, and highlighted, in particular, its youth and educational outreach, the United Nations Academic Impact initiative and Model United Nations, which focused on engaging young people in the debate and encouraged them to find solutions. It was of paramount importance to promote tolerance, diversity and peaceful settlement in an era when the world was engulfed in tumultuous violence.

10. The success of the information campaigns hinged upon collaboration and partnerships not only with media outlets, but also with civil society and academia. All those endeavours should be deeply rooted in facilitating access to information and bridging disparities between developed and developing countries in the fields of technology and connectivity.

11. That accessibility would only be strengthened through the use of the six official languages of the United Nations, and particularly Arabic, in the framework of multilingualism. It would also be reinforced by the use of both traditional media channels and interactive social media platforms in promoting the Organization's messages and thematic campaigns on such subjects as the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change, combating terrorism and violent extremism and large movements of refugees and migrants. Partnerships with regional and national networks must be intensified in order to broaden the Department's audience. Lebanon praised the improvement of the Organization's website and the

timely issuance of press releases and media briefings, encouraging the Department to continue its close collaboration with the Department of Political Affairs and Department of Peacekeeping Operations in order to maintain the integrity of the facts reported.

12. The United Nations Information Centre in Beirut was a notable example of mission coordination. It continued to implement an integrated regional approach, combining peacekeeping efforts with those related to politics, civil affairs and development. It also published biweekly articles in Arabic on the Sustainable Development Goals in partnership with the *Lebanon Debate* news website and *Ad-Diyar*, and covered visits of the Secretary-General and goodwill ambassadors in order to raise awareness of the challenges facing refugees and their host communities. Facing such daunting tasks, the good functioning of the information centres required increased support from United Nations Headquarters in securing adequate staff and financing.

13. Lebanon praised the work carried out by the Department's Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine towards raising awareness and ending the Israeli occupation in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. Welcoming the inclusion of young Lebanese journalists in the Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme, her delegation paid tribute to journalists, who sought the truth and stood for just causes at the expense of their own safety and security too many times.

14. **Mr. Mgobozi** (South Africa) said that his Government supported the guidance provided by the Committee on Information to the Department and encouraged continued cooperation between them. South Africa had benefited from the work of the United Nations in promoting global awareness and public action against apartheid. The Organization was instrumental in eliminating the apartheid regime's legalized racial discrimination. Presently, a free and democratic South Africa collaborated with the Department on the global promotion of Nelson Mandela International Day. The international community must draw inspiration from that global icon's love for humanity and belief in the goodness of the human race by taking action and inciting positive change in the world.

15. South Africa lauded the important role played by the United Nations information centres in drawing attention to the plight of oppressed and occupied people and rallying global support for their liberation. The question of Palestine deserved the international community's continued special attention. The Department's work in training Palestinian journalists and supporting the State of Palestine during the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was also welcomed.

16. In partnership with the Organization, South Africa had recently co-hosted an International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East. Held for the first time in sub-Saharan Africa, the seminar helped raise awareness on the situation in Palestine in a balanced and objective manner and offered an opportunity for civil society and the media to contribute to the dialogue in a conducive atmosphere.

17. Promotion of human rights and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) were some of the Department's key areas of work. The Department must coordinate with the Committee to expand its efforts on disseminating information on the situation in Western Sahara with a special focus on implementing the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Given that Western Sahara was the last colony on the African continent, it was important to publicize the Sahrawi people's plight.

18. His delegation commended the Department for highlighting, through its outreach campaigns, the significant decisions made by the international community over the past year, which included the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change, and key decisions on peacekeeping, peacebuilding and disarmament. South Africa agreed that building a knowledge base and ensuring an accurate understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals was crucial for their implementation.

19. As a developing country, South Africa attached great importance to the role of the United Nations information centres in enhancing the Organization's global image and fostering a common understanding of the ideals and principles advanced by it. His Government agreed about the importance of integrating modern infrastructure and technology in the dissemination of vital information on the Organization's

work. The international community must, however, be mindful of the existing information and communication technology gap between the developing and developed world. Bridging that technological divide was critical to the advancement of the world.

20. **Ms. Lynn** (Myanmar) said that her Government highly valued the Department's role in promoting global awareness and understanding of the work of the United Nations, as well as the role of the Committee on Information in overseeing the Organization's public information policies and activities and making appropriate policy recommendations to the General Assembly.

21. Better connection with the general public would significantly increase the Organization's relevance. In that regard, the Department played an indispensable part in reaching out to the people on all three pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, human rights and development. Myanmar commended the Department's outreach activities and encouraged their continuation, especially in a developing country like itself. The Department should also bolster its work to further promote the positive image of and raise awareness about the United Nations.

22. That year's celebration of United Nations Day, organized in close cooperation with the United Nations Information Centre and all United Nations entities in Myanmar, would be attended by high-level Government representatives, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations. It would send a strong message about her Government's efforts to bring peace to the entire country and achieve national reconciliation among all the country's stakeholders. Myanmar highly appreciated the Secretary-General's attendance at the opening ceremony of the 21st-Century Panglong Conference, held in Nay Pyi Taw in September 2016. The Department did well to use social media platforms to complement its use of traditional media. However, the international community must be aware that those same social media platforms could convey intolerance, hatred, hostility and extremist ideas. Myanmar would work with the Department to bring maximum benefit to the global audience and promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in order to counter the spread of extremism.

23. Developed countries with advanced technology must work with developing countries to bridge the

digital divide. Moreover, since so many of the world's peoples were held back by language barriers, Member States were encouraged to assist them by disseminating information about the United Nations in their local languages. In connection with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Myanmar had formulated a national development plan in line with the Sustainable Development Goals and supported the Organization's efforts towards their successful realization.

24. Accurate and credible information was important in the modern, rapidly changing world, where global interaction and interconnectivity had created a massive and relentless flow of information. As the public voice of the United Nations, the Department played a vital role in conveying its messages accurately to the global audience. Her Government commended the Department for fulfilling its duties with professional integrity and giving due regard to the needs of States Members, and remained committed to working with all stakeholders to achieve common goals.

25. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh), citing the report of the Committee on Information ([A/71/21](#)) and that of the Secretary-General, said that his delegation appreciated the general thrust of the Department's work under the motto *Inform. Engage. Act.*

26. Noting the Department's communication and outreach activities to promote multilingualism, including through social media platforms, and to mark the observance of various important international days, his delegation had discussed with the Department the possibility of observing the International Mother Language Day on 21 February, as designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The significance of that day lay in promoting respect for pluralism, diversity, tolerance and the value of a multilingual education at a time when visible manifestations of xenophobia and intolerance were on the rise and numerous languages spoken by smaller populations and ethnic communities were on the verge of extinction.

27. The agreement among Member States on the comprehensive notion of sustaining peace had been an important achievement for the United Nations in 2016. Explaining that notion to a wider membership and audience was clearly needed, with all major organs and bodies of the United Nations building synergies and coherence in their respective mandated work through

the entire spectrum of the Organization's conflict-resolution and peace initiatives. The Department could further promote that objective through its targeted communications and outreach initiatives, and should also continue promoting a culture of peace and non-violence as part of its outreach to children, youth and the wider public audience. Sustained investment in education and awareness-raising was necessary to build resilience against war, violence and hatred in human minds. The Organization's information campaign on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should also be designed to mobilize greater public engagement.

28. The Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism ([A/70/675](#)) had been an important addition to the Organization's efforts towards implementing the four mutually-reinforcing pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Department could further build on its partnership with the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force to disseminate information about the Plan with a view to informing national and regional-level dialogues and strategies. The Department could use its expertise in strategic communication strategies and tools to offer viable alternatives to terrorist ideologies and narratives.

29. Recently, there had been an ominous trend of violations of fundamental humanitarian principles during armed conflicts by both State and non-State actors. Humanitarian assistance had been impeded, including by attacks and blockades. Refugees and asylum seekers from conflict-torn areas were denied entry and protected spaces. Against that backdrop, that year's World Humanitarian Summit and high-level summit to address large movements of refugees and migrants had had critical political messages to impart that needed to reach a global public audience.

30. Bangladesh looked forward to the Department's contributions to the global compact for safe, regular and orderly migration in the next two years. As the current chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, it underscored the importance of forging global public opinion in favour of a sound comprehensive framework for international migration.

31. The Department should build on its efforts to promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and maintain momentum, particularly at the outset. One way to optimize the Department's resources would

be to highlight both success stories and those revealing existing and emerging challenges needing the international community's attention. The Department should continue emphasizing the structural challenges faced by the least developed countries and stressing the importance of fulfilling international commitments to address those challenges. That year's midterm review conference for the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 could provide useful guidance in communication and outreach.

32. With the landmark Paris Agreement on climate change currently being ratified by a growing number of Member States, the Organization's public outreach efforts should emphasize the importance of implementing the agreement by highlighting good practices and evolving challenges. Furthermore, the Department could publicize the technical elements and commitments listed in that agreement as well as in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

33. Bangladesh commended the Department's role in celebrating and commemorating days and events related to social issues and was pleased to collaborate with it on World Autism Day. It appreciated the supporting role played by the United Nations information centres in various capitals, including Dhaka, underlining that Centre's ongoing efforts to disseminate the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations among its youth. His delegation valued the centres' contribution to disseminating critical messages on sustainable development, migration, peacekeeping, human rights and general and complete disarmament, which constituted priority areas for his country's engagement with the United Nations.

34. **Mr. Rattray** (Jamaica), noting that the wide range of activities and partnerships undertaken by the Department augured well for their continued effectiveness and growing impact, said that Jamaica welcomed the development and implementation of a new evaluation policy in line with the standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group. The Department's current evaluation of gender equality and women's empowerment and the development of performance indicators for the proposed strategic framework for 2018-2019 (A/71/6 (Prog. 24)) were also welcome. However, while harnessing the various communications technologies at the Organization's disposal, the

Department must be mindful of the digital divide existing within and across developing countries, as noted at the thirty-eighth session of the Committee on Information.

35. Efficiency in public information and communication remained a policy priority for his Government. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Information was currently reviewing plans to modernize the country's ICT framework. One initiative to that end was the introduction of an overarching information policy regulating access to and dissemination and preservation of Government information, with a funding model for sustainable public broadcasting operations. Existing legislation on electronic media would also be amended temporarily, pending the promulgation of a more contemporary ICT Act. The Ministry also collaborated with the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology to ensure the effective use of technology in support of education and education administration.

36. Having partnered with the Department on numerous projects, most notably on the commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Permanent Memorial to honour those victims, Jamaica commended the range of activities organized under the Remember Slavery programme and looked forward to further collaboration in the future. As the United Nations addressed the plethora of challenges facing the international community, the Department must reach its audience through multiple platforms in as many languages as possible, in interactive, informative and empowering ways, as noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/71/227). Nowhere was that more necessary than in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Organization must devise communication strategies to raise awareness thereon among the general public, who were ultimately the key stakeholders in the process. Jamaica would continue to work to that end as a member of the Committee on Information.

37. **Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information were responsible for ensuring that the United Nations message reached all corners of the world and that its objectives and activities were

represented clearly. At a time when conflicts and cross-border challenges such as extremism and terrorism were on the rise, flouting both international law and the principle of good-neighbourly relations among Member States, the United Nations must assume a more positive role by raising awareness, spreading a culture of peace, rejecting all manner of conflict and promoting the principle of mutual respect.

38. 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.

39. 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” and “non-State armed groups” by United Nations representatives.

40. 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 targeting of journalists and peace activists, the apartheid wall, the desecration and destruction of Islamic and Christian holy sites and increasing settlement activity and settler violence. The Department of Public Information must also redouble its efforts achieve parity among the official languages of the United Nations and remedy the deficiencies of its Arabic-language website. In addition, the Department could play an important role in encouraging dialogue and building understanding among cultures and peoples.

41. His delegation reaffirmed that freedom of expression was a universal right that should never be used to attack the beliefs, holy sites or heritage of others. All States should support the work of the Department to promote the message of the United Nations and tackle pressing global issues such as

ending all forms of occupation, combating terrorism and promoting sustainable development.

42. **Ms. Jazairy** (Algeria) said that the Department should continue promoting the work of the Secretary-General and the United Nations. Although there had been wide media coverage of the process of selecting and appointing the ninth Secretary-General, more could still be done to educate the global audience about the General Assembly’s role. The recommendation contained in Security Council resolution [2311 \(2016\)](#) should not be considered the end of the selection procedure. A reinvigorated General Assembly would contribute significantly to strengthening the United Nations system, improving international governance and enhancing multilateralism.

43. Algeria fully supported the Department’s initiatives and awareness programmes to address issues such as decolonization, peacekeeping, disarmament, human rights, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other Arab territories, sustainable development, poverty eradication, the needs of the African continent and climate change. Her Government looked forward to the translation of the leaflet entitled *What the United Nations Can Do to Assist Non-Self-Governing Territories* into the other official languages, as set out in the Secretary-General’s aforementioned report. The Department should also disseminate information on the situation in Western Sahara in coordination with the Special Political and Decolonization Committee, with a view to implementing the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Her delegation recalled that the question of Western Sahara remained the last unresolved colonial issue in Africa.

44. Her Government welcomed the Department’s promotion of the aims and priorities of NEPAD through its *Africa Renewal* magazine and website, which also publicized the launch of the Pan-African passport. The Department’s participation in the annual conference of the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa was also welcomed.

45. Algeria was deeply concerned about the potential for the politicization and misuse of information and communications technology to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign States and destabilize countries and regions in contravention of the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.



46. Given the changing media landscape and renewed emphasis on digital platforms, the Department's use of social media was a welcome step towards broadening the reach of the United Nations, particularly among youth. Conventional media, namely print, radio and television, must continue to be used because they remained the primary means of public communication in many developing countries. Multilingualism should be mainstreamed into all of the Department's activities to ensure the accountability, transparency, ownership and sustainability of its communications. Her delegation called for the implementation of General Assembly resolution [69/324](#) promoting unity in diversity and international understanding, and welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to include adequate resources for the full implementation of multilingualism in the Department's work in his programme budget proposal.

47. It was important to make use of all the Organization's official languages, and particularly Arabic, while ensuring their full and equitable treatment in all the Department's activities. The expansion of the Arabic Unit's multimedia work was welcome. Regrettably, there were discrepancies in press releases, and particularly French-language ones issued by the Fourth Committee. The Department must fully implement the provisions of General Assembly resolution [70/305](#), and specifically para. 33. Her Government supported the work of the United Nations information centres and called for strengthening them. While the Department's live and on-demand webcast services were appreciated, they should be made available to all the committees of the General Assembly and particularly the Sixth Committee during its session of the Special Committee on the Charter of the United Nations and on the Strengthening of the Role of the Organization. As always, the Department could count on Algeria's partnership in engaging people across multiple platforms in as many languages as possible in ways that were interactive, innovative and empowering for a more peaceful and just world.

48. **Mr. Ben Sliman** (Tunisia) said that the efforts of the Department of Public Information to foster understanding of the activities and goals of the United Nations were especially commendable given the reassurance they provided to populations grappling with the uncertainty of the current global climate. His delegation welcomed the Department's close

collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support to promote peacekeeping. Its engagement with United Nations counter-terrorism entities was also worthy of note.

49. 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. Having played an important role in the campaign on the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Department's contribution to promoting the Sustainable Development Goals would be equally vital. To make the message of the United Nations more universal, additional efforts to expand multilingual content were needed. Multilingualism was an indispensable tool for transparent, accountable and sustainable communication, and was also vital in consolidating the multilateral system.

50. 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 growing Palestinian suffering and continued Israeli violations of international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions.

51. **Mr. Idriss** (Sudan) said that multilingualism was vital to strengthening international unity and understanding. The United Nations should integrate multilingualism into all its activities, bridge the existing multilingualism gap and promote system-wide awareness of the fact that all six official United Nations languages had equal standing. Given that language remained a barrier to communication worldwide, multilingualism would help the Organization communicate with people in the developing world. In that connection, his delegation supported the efforts of the United Nations information centres to disseminate in local languages information on the activities of the Organization and on the challenges facing the international community. The Department of Public Information should continue to support and strengthen the technical and human resource capacities of media centres worldwide.



52. While the Organization's use of social media to reach broader audiences was laudable, it should not come at the expense of traditional media. With populations in developing countries still lacking Internet access and relying on traditional media, the Department should take steps to bridge the widening informational divide between developed and developing countries. Furthermore, given the dangers of inaccurate reports and distorted information, the Department must exercise caution to avoid misusing public information and information technology. It was incumbent upon the entire Organization to lead by example and adhere to the highest standards of transparency, trustworthiness and responsibility.

53. **Mr. Kishimori** (Japan) said that his delegation looked forward to its continued collaboration with the Department in the observation of the International Day of Peace and the annual Peace Bell ceremony on 16 September. The United Nations Information Centre in Tokyo remained committed to the important task of disseminating information on the Organization's work to the Japanese public and promoting its activities, in close collaboration with the Government of Japan. To promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Centre had recently organized a global photography contest for students on that topic, receiving more than 600 entries from 50 countries. In addition, the Centre contributed to the United Nations Academic Impact initiative by accepting applications for affiliation with that initiative from higher-education institutions in Japan; 43 institutions were currently members. Japan also hoped to continue expanding meaningful collaboration with the Office of the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth.

54. One of the Department's top priorities should be promoting the 2030 Agenda. While the awareness-raising efforts undertaken by the Department thus far were commendable, it should continue using a variety of creative and accessible mediums, including photography and music, to inform young people on such serious issues as implementing the goals and rationalizing resources. In that regard, maintaining multiculturalism was crucial; while cartoon characters such as Red from Angry Birds and Wonder Woman might be widely recognizable honorary ambassadors in some parts of the world, other characters that were popular in Japan and East Asia could be more culturally relevant there. Ensuring diversity of cultures

and values in the promotion of the 2030 Agenda was important, and the role of United Nations information centres was key in that regard.

55. Multilingualism was significant to the Organization and its Member States. However, it should continue to be implemented in a cost-neutral manner, through creative schemes such as translation partnerships with universities, including for languages other than the six official languages. In addition to having no budgetary implications, that would allow printed publications such as *Africa Renewal* to reach a wider audience, providing students the opportunity to learn about development initiatives in Africa in their own languages. He reiterated his country's firm support for the Department in the execution of its vital mandate.

56. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that it was vital to adapt information and communications strategies to their audience. To ensure universal access to the Organization's message, such factors as the digital divide and language barriers must be overcome. The Department of Public Information had made welcome efforts to generate demographically-diverse and multilingual content. Discussions of increasing the Department's resources to maintain the expansion of its multilingual capacity constituted recognition of requests made by Member States in that regard.

57. The Department must achieve parity among all the official languages of the United Nations in its activities. Financial and human resources should be distributed appropriately among the official languages. There was room for improvement, including in the United Nations webpage and the use of social media. The Journal, for example, could be produced in all official languages. Equal treatment of all of the Organization's official languages was important, in both traditional and new media, in accordance with relevant resolutions. The Group of Friends of Spanish was encouraged to continue its good work in addressing the needs of the extensive audience for Spanish content.

58. New information and communication technologies were not a substitute for traditional media. The image and presence of the United Nations should continue to be strengthened online as well as through traditional media, as radio, television and the printed press

continued to be among the principal sources of information for the populations of many countries.

59. Ensuring future generations' access to information was also important. Relevant strategies must therefore be designed to preserve the Organization's institutional memory, and ensure the sustainable management of and access to it.

60. The Department of Public Information had provided informative coverage of significant events; however there should be balance in information campaigns on priority issues determined by Member States. The Department should continue to direct its efforts at promoting the eradication of colonialism and others forms of foreign occupation, as well as to the special information programme on Palestine. The Palestinian journalist capacity-building programme was also useful and should be continued. The Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information were urged to ensure the broadest possible circulation of information on decolonization, including the coverage of all sessions of the Special Committee, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 70/103.

61. His Government was concerned by the covert and illegal use by individuals, organizations and States of the computer systems of other nations to attack third-party countries. The use of telecommunications to undermine the legal and political order of States was a violation of internationally-recognized norms in the matter, and could impact international peace.

62. The efforts of Cuba to use information and communication technologies peacefully continued to be frustrated by the United States Government, which frequently used radio and television transmissions, in contravention of the Charter and various provisions of the Convention of the International Telecommunications Union, to undermine the sovereignty of Cuba and incite the breakdown of constitutional order established by the Cuban people. Hopefully that aggressive policy would be ended, particularly because it was incompatible with the continued development of diplomatic relations between the two Governments. His Government also hoped that the harmful economic, commercial and financial blockade would be lifted.

63. The United Nations played a role in promoting the establishment of a new, more just and effective

world order in the area of information and communications, aimed at strengthening international peace and understanding. Cuba stood ready to collaborate with all nations to make that objective a reality.

64. **Mr. Nikolenko** (Ukraine) said that his delegation strongly endorsed greater multilingualism and developing an effective social-media strategy to keep up with current trends. While the update of the United Nations website was welcome, many of the websites of the Organization's committees, peacekeeping missions and subsidiary bodies should also be modernized.

65. United Nations news centres and radio were viewed as reliable sources of information in Ukraine, and their staff were encouraged to focus more on analysis and interviews with United Nations officials. Unfortunately, not every Government understood the importance of free, independent and pluralistic information sources or the free flow of information to the development of democratic societies or the building and improvement of relations among nations. Instead, some Governments used State-sponsored information campaigns to create chaos in other nations, employing the tools of misinformation and propaganda to brainwash citizens on a daily basis. Ukrainian journalists had been regular targets for attacks since the beginning of the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea by the Russian Federation. Mykola Semena, for example, had been charged for undermining the Russian Federation's so-called sovereignty over the Ukrainian peninsula, while Roman Sushchenko, known for his exposure of Russia's illegal actions against Ukraine, had been arrested without just cause in Moscow on 30 September. The international community must react and use all available means to facilitate his immediate release.

66. The Russian Federation had cut off all Ukrainian television channels and news agencies in Crimea, and repressed any who stood up against its occupation. Moreover, it had forcibly silenced the only Crimean Tatar television channel in the peninsula, the staff of which had been forced to flee in order to avoid death, abduction or arrest. The same methods were also being used in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine where the military aggression against Ukrainian citizens continued. All independent media had been

forced to close and leave the zones affected by the conflict, while those territories temporarily out of Ukraine's control were now subject to Russian State propaganda, which was intended to incite violence and justify its aggression against Ukraine.

67. The use of State-controlled media in the hybrid war being waged against Ukraine posed a direct threat to the values of the United Nations. The Committee and other bodies of the Organization should react rapidly to any attempts to falsify information and use it to fuel regional conflicts. The international community should seriously consider drafting an international legal instrument prohibiting international propaganda, with a view to protecting societies from State-led information war. Information security was key to every national security system, and the United Nations should identify and hold to account any who engaged in Cold-War-like practices.

68. **Mr. Bosah** (Nigeria) said that his Government commended the Department of Public Information for its use of novel technology, promotion of multilingualism, and campaign to raise awareness of climate change and the post-2015 development agenda, as well as for its collaboration with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs with a view to propagating United Nations peacekeeping efforts. His delegation acknowledged, in particular, the Department's reporting of the terrorist activities of Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria and the efforts of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin to combat the extremist group.

69. United Nations efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism should be disseminated more widely. The Department should increase outreach to schools and universities, and the capacity of information centres in developing countries should be increased in order to better circulate information on the work of the United Nations.

70. Advances in information technology offered extensive channels for creating awareness and disseminating information on that work, and his Government appreciated efforts to create new, accessible digital products utilizing social-media platforms in multiple languages. However, as most developing countries still had only basic information systems, the need for balance between modern and traditional means of communication remained.

Television and radio should continue to be used to ensure the broadest possible dissemination of information on the Organization's activities.

71. His Government commended the Department's publication of *Africa Renewal* in English and French, which had contributed to global awareness of and support for NEPAD, and had been featured in many media outlets in a number of countries.

72. Department networks that facilitated communication and the delivery of media products in all six official languages should be strengthened. In that vein, its proposed strategic framework for 2018-2019 to create partnerships and build support for the goals and objectives of the United Nations was welcome. Furthermore, his Government encouraged the Department to continue to publicize United Nations efforts to address major global challenges across diverse platforms, in as many languages as possible and with a broad range of partners.

73. **Mr. Prasad** (India) said that his Government welcomed the work done by the Department of Public Information to raise awareness on various issues, including the contributions of United Nations peacekeepers, and the importance of holistic health care through its coverage of International Day of Yoga events. Hopefully its initiatives in the area of United Nations counter-terrorism efforts would help to build consensus around the adoption of the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

74. The Department had also promoted awareness of the world's unprecedented refugee crisis. It had collaborated with his delegation a photo exhibition on the African presence in India, which, along with its support for United Nations activities in Africa, had highlighted the potential of that continent and its inhabitants, as well as the potential benefits of migratory flows.

75. Conducting outreach in the six official languages of the Organization was insufficient to communicate to global audiences. Given the proportion of the world population residing in the South Asia, greater attention should be paid to the languages of the region. The Department could look to its Academic Impact initiative, to which the Indian Government had committed \$2 million for the period 2015-2016, to build partnerships with South Asian universities to

develop the required language capability. The expertise of the Initiative should also be harnessed to advance United Nations initiatives in the areas of development and climate change.

76. Demonstrating its commitment to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and climate-change mitigation, his Government had deposited its ratification instrument of the Paris Agreement earlier that fall. He also noted with satisfaction that some activities in the “Turn the World United Nations Blue” campaign had featured a series of events in Indian cities on such topics as United Nations reform and partnerships for peace and development. India would continue to support Department of Public Information initiatives.

77. **Ms. Rivera Sánchez** (El Salvador) said that all United Nations communications should be transparent and aimed at fully informing the public about the objectives and goals of the Organization. Her Government wished to highlight several relevant issues in that regard:

78. First, the Department should focus on providing accurate, impartial, extensive, balanced and relevant information in a variety of languages with a view to strengthening international support for the Organization’s activities. Her Government therefore supported Department broadcasting campaigns on issues of interest to the international community.

79. Secondly, either measures or a regulatory framework should be adopted to ensure information and communications technologies were not used in a manner detrimental to such overarching objectives as development and the promotion of peace.

80. Thirdly, in coordination with interested parties, the Department should ensure that multilingualism was incorporated in all communication and information activities within the limits of existing resources and on an equitable basis.

81. Fourthly, bearing in mind that United Nations information centres helped to bring information to the widest possible audience, using more than the six official languages of the United Nations, her Government was concerned by the Department’s failure to prioritize the work of those centres within its expansion and strengthening strategy. The Secretary-General should accordingly present a detailed report on

the functioning of those centres and their scope in developing countries.

82. Awareness of the contributions of Member States to peacekeeping and special political missions should be raised via social-media platforms. The relevant dedicated websites should be consistently updated in all official languages, as their promotion and support of such missions were essential to motivating Member States to join peacekeeping forces.

83. **Mr. Elmodir** (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, and in keeping pace with rapid developments in information and communication technology. He welcomed its recent collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs.

84. Among the most important factors influencing international relations, audio-visual and print media reached a wide audience and conveyed knowledge that had an impact on people’s conduct. The Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information had a duty 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.

85. States should redouble their efforts to cooperate on bridging the digital divide between developed and developing countries. Moreover, traditional media — the chief source of information for most developing countries — should be strengthened. Highlighting the need to support United Nations information centres, he pointed out that the Information Centre in Tripoli had been forced to suspend its activities as a result of his country’s economic difficulties. The Libyan National Consensus Government was working to address that situation and hoped that the relevant United Nations entities would provide the Centre with temporary financial backing in order to enable it to resume operations once the country’s stability was restored.

86. Linguistic diversity in the Department’s activities should be promoted, with a view to achieving linguistic parity and ensuring distribution of all publications in all six official United Nations languages, in addition to increasing the number of

publications issued in Arabic. The Department's Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine should be singled out for excellence. The Department should assume a broader role in educating the public on the suffering of the Palestinian people under the brutal Israeli occupation. His Government hoped that the Department of Public Information would work more closely with local media outlets in order to promote and spread a culture of peace and to properly define human-rights concepts for media professionals, who should receive guidelines on the boundaries that they must respect when dealing with important local issues.

87. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Committee on Information played crucial roles as the main intergovernmental policymaking body providing the Department of Public Information with policy, programme and activity guidance, as well as in the positive portrayal of United Nations activities, and should continue to focus on issues and challenges directly affecting international peace and security. It should also promote initiatives to tackle such challenges as violent extremism, and explore ways to promote General Assembly resolution [70/109](#).

88. His delegation categorically rejected the misuse of information and communications technologies, which should be employed in a manner compatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, and the principles of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

89. His delegation attached importance to international awareness-raising on the question of Palestine, and commended the Department's special information programme on the matter, in particular the training programme for Palestinian journalists. The Department should use all available means and spare no effort to assist the Palestinian people in other areas. His Government also appreciated Department coverage of events related to the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People; those efforts should continue. The Department should also continue to implement its fellowship programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries.

90. Strengthening the capacity of United Nations information centres should be prioritized, enabling them to better disseminate the messages of the United

Nations and promote its public image, particularly in developing countries. The Academic Impact Initiative was a successful example of the Department's global outreach and partnership with universities and other higher-level education centres. Efforts to strengthen such partnerships, expand outreach and increase the number of schools in its global network should be made.

91. **Mr. Sanabria Rivarola** (Paraguay), welcoming the Department's proactive efforts to incorporate new technologies for promoting the Organization's initiatives, said that although his delegation supported the budding social-media presence, traditional media nevertheless remained the only means of getting information on the United Nations and its work for the majority of the world's population. Because technological advances were fundamental to equitable development, the increasing digital divide between developed and developing countries remained a major concern. States, regulatory authorities, civil society and the private sector must all join efforts to bridge that divide, in line with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Equal access to new information and communications technologies could drive national prosperity and create new economic opportunities; their importance for vulnerable countries, such as landlocked developing countries, could not be overemphasized. Greater technical and financial assistance were needed to facilitate technology and knowledge transfers to and capacity-building in developing countries.

92. Multilingualism and parity among the six official languages of the Organization must be respected in all its communications and media. It was therefore necessary to improve the availability of real-time information in the Spanish language, which ranked second in the number of webpages and social media platforms visited.

93. The Department should better coordinate the drafting and dissemination of messages about the Organization's main fields of action, including the development agenda, climate change, peacekeeping, and women, peace and security. It was vital for the Department to participate in peacekeeping and special political missions — from the planning stage to deployment — as and where relevant. Coordination among relevant United Nations Departments was also

key to raising awareness of the realities, challenges faced, lessons learned and successes of those missions. They also required staff sufficiently trained to manage expectations regarding the Organization's presence. Despite recent technological advances, nothing replaced field presence. He also reiterated the importance of greater coordination between the Department and the Offices of the Secretary-General and of the President of the General Assembly for ensuring the coherence and timeliness of United Nations communications. Furthermore, generating and disseminating comprehensive, balanced, objective and equitable information, in all the official languages, must be based on the principles of editorial independence, impartiality and accuracy.

94. **Mr. Almahmoud** (United Arab Emirates) said that by their influence on public opinion and reach to a wide audience, mass communication and social media played a pivotal role in facilitating co-existence and forming bonds between peoples. The Department must continue its efforts to raise global awareness, engage the public, share knowledge and build partnerships.

95. The Department's role was becoming increasingly important in the light of the brutal attacks by extremist and terrorist groups using modern technology to spread hatred, violence and racism, and to recruit foreign terrorist fighters. It was therefore necessary to establish media hubs and outlets that could expose the falsehoods perpetuated by those groups and provide a platform for moderate voices that rejected terrorism. In collaboration with the United States, his country had established the Sawab Center to counter Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) propaganda. He commended the Department's counter-terrorism efforts, including the design of a new web platform with links to the main United Nations counter-terrorism entities.

96. The United Arab Emirates welcomed the Department's activities under the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, including the annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East. Such awareness-raising programmes must be strengthened. It was also vital to expose the suffering of the Palestinian people and the human rights violations inflicted by Israel, in breach of United Nations resolutions. The Department's increasing role in promoting the activities of the United Nations via its

coverage of key events through diverse media had widened the Organization's audience. In that regard, he underscored the importance of the timely translation of all United Nations publications and press releases into all six official languages to facilitate their wide dissemination. Continued expansion of Arabic-language services in all of the Department's activities and programmes was also crucial for spreading the United Nations message and values more effectively among Arab communities. Lastly, he could not overemphasize the need for fact-checking by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General to avoid erroneous and potentially counterproductive statements.

97. **Mr. Mana** (Cameroon) said that despite the many United Nations resolutions calling for efforts to improve universal and equal access to information, it was evident that the unending monopoly of technology by the few was leading to a unified world view. Cameroon was determined not to sit on the sidelines of technological progress, but to be a part of the information society. It had undertaken a large-scale project to build multipurpose community telecentres to improve Internet access in rural areas, and given incentives to organizations working to reduce the country's digital divide and promote the information society. To that end, his Government was building a 5,600 km-long national fibre optic network that would form a national backbone connecting its regional, departmental and municipal capitals.

98. His delegation appreciated the Department's efforts to achieve an inclusive information society and disseminate detailed information on the principles, ideals, objectives and work of the Organization. However, the Department could strengthen and contextualize its efforts by, for example, going beyond simply reporting Boko Haram's actions and instead providing balanced, educational information from the United Nations — with the assistance of the United Nations Information Centre in Yaoundé — on the dangers of violent extremism and the virtues of tolerance and respect for diversity. Similarly, the Yaoundé Centre could conduct outreach campaigns on climate change to raise awareness among local populations about the extent of the problem, perhaps even in indigenous languages.

99. Cameroon was convinced that the impact of United Nations action would be optimized by making



the same information available to everyone, in real time. In that regard, despite the reluctance of those concerned with cost-effectiveness, more should be done to ensure the equal treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations. Online information services should be made available in all six official languages without a significant lag between their publication in one language and their translation into the others. While the quality of the Department's online information was commendable, that information was inaccessible to many, who lacked access to the Internet and relied on radio broadcasts and paper publications for information. United Nations information centres, such as the one in Yaoundé, continued to make information available in hard copy and electronic format, did commendable work and should be given the human and financial resources they needed.

100. **Mr. Lim Hoon-Min** (Republic of Korea) said that the steady progress the Organization had made in fulfilling its mandate at local, regional and global levels was owed in part to the successful dissemination of its values and vision to countries and peoples worldwide. The Department had contributed significantly to that awareness-raising through its use of various communications media. A new era of global public engagement and communication had been heralded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which required the active participation and full support of multiple stakeholders. To engage people in the new agenda, strong communication and advocacy by the United Nations were needed at the country level. Forward-thinking means of communication must be explored in order to involve more actors from civil society and the general public.

101. While the Department's strides in new media platforms were appreciated, challenges in maintaining multilingualism and traditional media persisted. Those challenges could be effectively addressed by enhancing the role of United Nations information centres, which, as a direct link between the Organization and the people of the world, could reach out to media, educational institutions and State and non-State stakeholders in their own languages. His delegation therefore echoed the call for increased support to and coordination among the centres.

102. The role of young people in the Department's communications efforts was undeniable, as their voice was crucial for the implementation of the broader United Nations agenda. The Organization's future success would largely depend on how much of a driving force young people would be. The Department should therefore continue efforts in that regard.

103. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, vital for the implementation of United Nations initiatives, must complement national efforts and the work of the system; those led by the Organization, in particular, must be transparent, accountable and share its values and principles. The Department's outreach work was thus critical. His country had been a proactive participant in those efforts, hosting several conferences, including a public-diplomacy symposium in collaboration with the United Nations Academic Impact, which had provided a meaningful opportunity to discuss the Organization's new communications strategy in the face of a dynamically changing landscape, and an NGO conference on the theme of education for global citizenship. He hoped that as the Organization transitioned to a new Secretary-General, the Department would continue to carry out its mandate through informative and engaging communication.

104. **Mr. Strzhizhovski** (Russian Federation) said that his Government supported the Organization's efforts to use innovative technology to broaden its global audience so as to advance its goals and ideals. That being said, there was a need to expand the Organization's presence in traditional as well as new media. With regard to language parity, his delegation agreed on the need to translate the Organization's public materials into more languages, especially its official languages, including Russian. More attention must be devoted to providing the United Nations information centres with relevant and up-to-date audio and video materials in local languages.

105. Ignoring journalists' safety was unacceptable. Previous statements had implied that the topic did not fall under the Committee's agenda despite the mayhem taking place in that sphere. His Government was confused, to say the least, by the Ukrainian delegation's attempts to shift the blame for its numerous problems with freedom of expression and respect for human rights and its flouting of international norms in the area of journalists' work.

The Kyiv authorities blocked the broadcasting of Russian television channels and hindered the work of or shut down dissenting mass media in total disregard of Ukrainian laws and international norms. Of greatest concern was the safety of journalists on Ukrainian territory. Investigation of the recent killings of several prominent mass-media representatives in Ukraine did not appear to be a priority for Ukrainian authorities. His delegation called on its Ukrainian colleagues to resolve issues with freedom of mass media and investigate the murders of journalists in their own country before lecturing others.

106. **Mr. Nikolenko** (Ukraine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the Ukrainian authorities gave due attention to the comprehensive and impartial investigation of cases of violence against and intimidation of members of the media, and strongly condemned all attacks against journalists, whose safety must be guaranteed at all times. It was both the duty and the right of every State to defend itself from external aggression. The Government of Ukraine legitimately aimed to protect its citizens, their rights and freedoms while countering an aggression by another Member State, which utilized the media as an instrument of warfare. All measures to counter information warfare, including temporary measures regarding Russian media outlets and journalists, had been undertaken in line with domestic legislation and international standards in human rights and the rule of law, particularly with regard to national security and public order. The purpose of those measures was clearly to protect human rights in Ukraine against the backdrop of the hybrid war waged by the Russian Federation and could not be regarded as excessive.

107. He recalled that 7 October 2016 marked the ten-year anniversary of the assassination in Moscow of a prominent Russian journalist, Anna Politkovskaya, known for her critical investigations of the Russian Federation policy in the war-ravaged region of Chechnya.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*