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Committee on Information

Report on the twenty-ninth session (30 April-11 May 2007)

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Chapter III

General debate

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15. Speaking on behalf of a large group, another speaker welcomed the more strategic approach being taken by the Department in executing its mandate, as well as its increased coordination with other areas in the United Nations. Its efforts to improve outreach had also begun bearing fruit, judging by feedback from educators and students. He noted that the Department's efforts to engage the public on issues relating to the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development and the question of Palestine. The Department had also successfully turned the global spotlight on United Nations peacekeeping work, which was an important area of the Organization's operations, and commended it for the role it had played in commemorating the two hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, he said.

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18. Referring to the four themes, peace and security, climate change, the Millennium Development Goals and human rights, identified by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information as main areas of future activities of the Department, one speaker said that due attention should also be given to issues such as the Palestinian question, migration and its causes, Africa's development and the dialogue among civilizations. Another speaker believed that the source of much of the violence and hostility prevailing in today's world was from prejudice born out of misunderstanding, miscommunication or lack of communication. He said that promoting dialogue among civilizations as an appropriate step could contribute considerably to better understanding and the fostering of friendship among nations. He hoped that the Secretary-General would spare no effort to promote and strengthen this important internationally consensus-based idea on a continuous basis.

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32. A number of speakers commented on the Department's information programme on the question of Palestine. One speaker congratulated the Department for its activities in that regard and encouraged it to continue to actively follow the situation, to offer its cooperation and support to Palestinian civil society organizations and to marshal even more solidarity and support from the international community for the Palestinian people, with the overall goal of promoting the exercise of their inalienable rights and the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. Another speaker noted that the United Nations visitors' tours did not sufficiently address the question of Palestine and hoped that the Department would consider making the question of Palestine a bigger part of the tours. Another speaker, referring to the implementation of General Assembly resolutions on the Palestinian information programme, regretted that, by its very definition, the programme promoted a one-sided narrative. Especially at a time of United Nations reform and revitalization, the speaker felt that the programme should be substituted, in due course, with a more balanced and constructive joint effort concerning peace in the Middle East, aimed at the promotion of tolerance, peace education, mutual understanding and the prevention of incitement. Another speaker said that his country looked forward to a United Nations media message that could advance efforts to enhance dialogue and understanding among civilizations and narrow the gap between the countries of the North and South.

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