

16 October 2013



General Assembly

GA/SPD/534

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

Sixty-eighth General Assembly
Fourth Committee
9th Meeting (AM)

UNITED NATIONS COMMUNICATIONS CHIEF TELLS MEMBER STATES IN FOURTH COMMITTEE ‘WORKING WITH YOU, WE CAN WIN SUPPORT OF PEOPLES YOU REPRESENT’

As Agenda Moves to Questions of Information, Speakers Stress Need to Keep Global Tragedies in Spotlight, Design ‘Cost-Neutral’ Strategy for Language Parity

“Working with you,” Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal, told the Fourth Committee today as it opened its yearly consideration of questions relating to information, “we can, through action and message, help to sustain — or to win — the engagement and support of the peoples you represent.”

The aim, he said, was to demonstrate the value of the human, ethical and financial investment in the United Nations, particularly at times of challenge and stringency. “Rarely, have our respective goals been so aligned,” he added, as he outlined the many ways in which the Department of Public Information had responded to Member States and nurtured their constituencies.

In numerous meetings throughout the year held to gauge the views of Member States, he said that almost all had asked for greater accessibility to the Department’s products and services, including through multilingual coverage. He spotlighted the many ways in which the Department had responded, including, for the first time, providing webcast in the annual General Assembly’s debate in the six official languages as well as the original language of the speaker.

The Department, he noted, had also offered a dedicated General Debate webpage with links to audio files in all official languages for all statements as well as multilingual and accessible websites featuring material on the Assembly’s high-level meetings on disability, migration and nuclear disarmament.

Yet another highlight was a multimedia feature in all official languages in connection with the International Day of Peacekeepers published on the United Nations News Centre portal. That had enabled visitors to hear interviews with Chinese peacekeepers in Liberia, learn about the work of the United Nations police carrying out night patrols in Darfur in an effort to stem sexual violence, and find out about the use of unmanned aerial vehicles in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Cooperation was the cornerstone of the Department’s overall approach to public information, and that had been illustrated during major United Nations events, he said, noting that it had worked closely with other United Nations partners through a communications group task force, to prepare a joint strategy, common messaging and visual materials, for the General Assembly President’s event on the Millennium Development Goals and related high-level gatherings.

Interdepartmental partnerships had also been at the forefront during the security and humanitarian crises in Mali and Syria, when the Department had collaborated with other departments by deploying some of its staff members to provide media and communications support to high-ranking United Nations officials. The Department was also working across the United Nations system and with the Organisation for the Prohibition of

Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to provide communications support to the joint team deployed to Damascus. Public information should be at the heart of everything that the United Nations did, from peace to human rights, he said.

The European Union's delegate welcomed the Department's attention to conflict zones such as Syria, the Sahel, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and stressed the importance of keeping international tragedies in the spotlight. Human rights issues, she said, adding that that should feature high on the Department's list of public diplomacy endeavours. The Union also supported efforts to maximise the use of new information and communication technologies, as well as social media, to inform the world about the United Nations.

The representative of Thailand, speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said the world was becoming smaller with the growing use of new media. At the same time, irresponsible use of social media could result in challenges to credibility. Warning that partial truths could have serious ramifications, he encouraged the Department not to neglect traditional media such as print, television, and radio.

Even as the use of United Nations websites had increased significantly, said the representative of Fiji on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the language disparity was deepening. Daily Press Releases had not been expanded to all official languages, despite previous resolutions, and the Group called on the Department to design a "cost-neutral strategy" to do so. It was the Secretariat's responsibility to mainstream multilingualism in all information activities.

Also encouraging the Department to ensure that information was disseminated in all six United Nations official languages and available in multiple media formats was the representative of Trinidad and Tobago, who, speaking on behalf Caribbean Community (CARICOM), stressed the need to increase accessibility for persons with various needs and to attract the widest possible audience.

Also speaking today were the representatives of Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, Senegal, Singapore, Syria and Ukraine.

The Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, Chibaula David Silwamba, introduced that body's report.

The Committee will meet at 10 a.m. on Thursday, 17 October, to continue its consideration of questions relating to information.

Background

The Fourth Committee (Special Political and Decolonization) was due to begin its annual consideration of questions relating to information, for which it had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the topic (document [A/68/315](#)), as well as that of the Committee on Information (document [A/68/21](#)).

Introduction of Report

CHIBAULA DAVID SILWAMBA, Committee on Information Rapporteur, said that the report, approved at the end of that body's thirty-fifth session, included four chapters, with the first two dealing with organizational issues. The third provided a summary of the general debate, while chapter IV presented two draft resolutions. The reports of the Secretary-General had been submitted by Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, and provided additional information on the work of the Department. An interactive dialogue with Member States had also been held.

He said that substantive issues had been the focus of debate, with an emphasis on the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and the Department as its public voice. Many speakers had welcomed the Department's growing use of new information and communication technologies, with one speaker noting that new information technologies had opened a range of possibilities. At the same time, several said they remained concerned about the growing digital gap between developed and developing countries. Speakers also had stressed the importance of freedom of press, with one regretting that, in his view, certain developed countries,

by taking advantage of their monopoly of modern communication technology, were trying to distort facts and news, and engineer events and developments, especially those relating to developing countries. Most speakers stressed the desire for multilingualism in the Department's work, and, in that context, welcomed the Department's pilot initiative to translate press releases into Spanish for the Commission on Population and Development session.

Following on that, many members had asked for more linguistic parity in the Department's work, he added. Several had commended the work of the United Nations Information Centres, stressing that any decision to reorganize them must be made in close consultation with the host countries and take into account the geographical, linguistic and technological characteristics and needs of the different regions.

Statement by Under-Secretary-General

PETER LAUNSKY-TIEFFENTHAL, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, updated the Committee on the Department's most recent efforts, noting, among other things, the numerous meetings he had held over the past year to gauge the views of Member States on how to make the Department's work more dynamic. Almost all had spoken in favour of greater accessibility to the Department's products and services, including through multilingual coverage. Many had also argued for enhanced cooperation with United Nations system entities. Several others had asked it to nurture its constituencies. In response, the Department had further calibrated its strategic approach to public information.

He said that the Department, for the first time, had been able to webcast live the General Assembly's debate in the Organization's six official languages as well as the original language of the speaker, including on a live YouTube channel. The Department had also launched a dedicated General Debate webpage, which featured links to audio files in all official languages for all statements, again, in addition to the original language of the speaker. The Department had also prepared multilingual and accessible websites, featuring material on the Assembly's high-level meetings on disability, migration and nuclear disarmament.

The Department's radio and online news teams, he went on, had joined forces to produce a multimedia feature in all six official languages in connection with the International Day of Peacekeepers, which had been published on the United Nations News Centre portal. Visitors to the site had been able to "hear interviews with Chinese peacekeepers in Liberia, learn about the work of the United Nations police carrying out night patrols in Darfur in an effort to stem sexual violence, and find out about the use of unmanned aerial vehicles to be deployed in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo". The Department had also collaborated with that of General Assembly and Conference Management on a number of new initiatives, including on a pilot project to produce Press Releases in Spanish.

In response to the message about enhancing cooperation with United Nations system entities, he said that such cooperation had been the cornerstone of the Department's overall approach to public information. Those efforts had come "most alive" during global crises and major United Nations events, including during the annual General Debate of the General Assembly. This year, for the Assembly President's special event on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and related high-level events, including on the post-2015 development agenda, the Department had worked closely with partners across the United Nations system, through a Communications Group Task Force, to prepare a joint communications strategy, common messaging and visual materials, such as short video and info-graphics. A set of inter-agency fact sheets on each of the development Goals had been prepared in all six official languages, with the latest achievements.

Touching on other efforts of the Department, he said it had worked to engage new audiences in the drive to end extreme poverty. In April, together with the United Nations Chief Executive Board and taking advantage of their meeting in Madrid, the United Nations Regional Information Centre in Brussels had collaborated with the Millennium Campaign office in Spain and other local partners to arrange for the Secretary-General to kick the opening ball at a Real Madrid football match. United Nations banners and videos at the stadium had emphasized the message that the international community must accelerate its actions towards achieving the development Goals, reaching an audience of tens of thousands in the stadium and millions more by broadcast.

During the Sixth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in July, the Department, he added, had collaborated closely with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to include closed captioning in the live and archived webcast of the meeting, as well as live

international sign-language interpretation for the first time ever at Headquarters. Among other developments, the Department had worked closely with the Office of the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan, and the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to observe the fourth International Day against Nuclear Tests, on 29 August.

Faced with security and humanitarian situations in Mali and Syria, the Department had collaborated with those of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs, and other partners to provide media and communications support to senior United Nations officials. For example, the Director of the Information Centre in Bogota and a Public Information Department staff member from Headquarters had been sent to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali in the start-up phase. The Information Centre in Ouagadougou also had provided practical support to the United Nations Mission in Mali. More recently, the Department was working with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to provide communications support to the joint team deployed to Damascus. The Director of the Information Centre Beirut supported the team conducting additional investigations on the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The Secretary-General, he noted, had proposed the merging into a single service of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in New York and the Geneva Library. A final decision would follow submission of detailed plans and a budget to the next General Assembly session. As for “nurturing constituencies of engagement”, in recent missions to China and Turkey, he had seen the value of reaching out to a broad range of new partners, from Government officials to university faculty and students to media, civil society and artists. The Department, in recent years, had “increasingly turned outward, forming new alliances and partnerships to attract newer and younger audiences”. The UNAI — United Nations Academic Impact — initiative, now in its third year, was a “global movement of minds committed to the exercise of intellectual social responsibility and of supporting UN goals”. Examples of its work included an accelerated learning programme, pioneered by the Institute of Rural Management of Pakistan, aimed at bringing children who had dropped out of primary school back to mainstream education.

To improve Model United Nations conferences, he said, the Department had developed a new online guide that detailed the structure, procedures, and skills needed to conduct an accurate United Nations conference simulation. The Information Centres also had provided significant support to the Department, he said, citing among the examples an event at the Centre in Windhoek in August, which had brought together 150 students from 20 different secondary schools to serve as General Assembly delegates. This month, the Vienna Centre had hosted the model United Nations. The Centres continued to play an important role in linking local communities and various audiences in order to promote the Organization’s work. As another example, he noted that the Rio Centre, in July, had helped to organize a Portuguese and English language exhibit on the United Nations in one of the busiest subway stations in there. The Centre in Pretoria had participated in an inner-city festival in August, which had attracted more than 500 participants, including non-governmental organizations.

The Department’s efforts to nurture constituencies also included support to Member States, including those from the Caribbean Community and the African Union, to raise awareness about the transatlantic slave trade, he said. It had provided communications support to last month’s announcement of the winning design for the Permanent Memorial to the victims of slavery. This month, it had held meetings with high-level delegations from Sudan and the Emirate of Sharjah to explore ideas on promoting an informed understanding of the Organization. It was also devoting greater attention to working with the creative community, in particular, that from film and television.

He stressed that the underlying objective of the Department’s efforts was to provide an informed understanding of the work and aims of the United Nations to “the largest audience in the most effective and accessible manner, and in the most number of languages”. The Department also strove to place public information at the heart of everything that the United Nations did, from peace to human rights.

“Working with you,” he said of the Member States, “we can, through action and message, help to sustain — or to win — the engagement and support of the peoples you represent.” The aim, he added, was to demonstrate the value of their human, ethical and financial investment in the United Nations, particularly at times of challenge and stringency. “Rarely have our respective goals been so aligned,” he concluded.

Statements

PETER THOMSON (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, recognized the Department's contribution to the significant progress made in public information. Still, many developing countries faced challenges accessing information about the Organization's activities, he said, attaching special importance to the Special Information Programme on the question of Palestine. The Group would also like the Department to share information about public development following on the Rio+20 Conference. It encouraged it as well to work with the Special Committee on Decolonization to raise awareness of the Third Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism 2011-2020, as much work remained to be done for the 17 Non-Self Governing Territories on the United Nations list.

The United Nations Information Centres were of great importance for the Group, he said, reiterating concern at the ongoing challenges of ageing office equipment and lack of a cost-effective system to access e-mail and the Organization's Intranet. He welcomed the rent-free premises provided by some developing Member States for the Centres, although he cautioned that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial resources from the United Nations programme budget. Decisions pertaining to the Centres must be made in close consultation with host countries, taking into account regional needs.

There was no doubt, he said, that use of United Nations websites had increased significantly in recent years. Despite efforts by the Public Information Department to improve its multilingual contents, the disparity was deepening. Daily Press Releases had not been expanded to all official languages, as requested in previous resolutions, and the Group called on the Department to design a "cost-neutral strategy" to do so in line with those decisions. Furthermore, the Group underlined the Secretariat's responsibility to mainstream multilingualism in all its communication and information activities. He emphasized the importance of traditional radio and print media as the primary means of disseminating United Nations' messages in many developing countries, and he called for proper preservation of the Organization's historical archive for future generations.

NORACHIT SINHASANI (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said the bloc valued highly the work of the Committee and the Department's role in making the voice of the United Nations heard. ASEAN commended the Department's integrated approach to key global issues of peace, security, peacekeeping, human rights, the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda. It also encouraged it to focus on its subprogrammes, such as strategic communications, news and outreach, and knowledge services, and urged it, alongside, the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, to continue their cooperation in raising awareness of new realities, including the successes and challenges faced as operations grew more multidimensional and complex.

He went on to call for the strengthening of communications capacities and the enhancement of information and communications technology, particularly in developing countries, saying the world was becoming smaller with the growing use of new media and digital technology. At the same time, however, social media posed a challenge of credibility and reliability of information, he said, warning that partial truths and misinformation could have serious ramifications. In that regard, the Department should continue to promote better understanding of cultural diversities and tolerance, and counter the use of hate speech, he said, emphasizing also that traditional media, such as print, television and radio, must not be neglected.

EDEN CHARLES (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of Caribbean Community (CARICOM), applauded the work of the Department and its promotion of United Nations' ideals. He noted the work done by the Department's outreach programmes on key health issues, but stressed the need for it to keep the issue of non-communicable diseases on its agenda, by disseminating information about those illnesses, and efforts undertaken by the United Nations system and Member States to address them. CARICOM also encouraged the Department to ensure that information disseminated in all six United Nations official languages and available in multiple media formats, in order to increase its accessibility for persons with various needs and attract the widest possible audience.

On the issue of slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade, he expressed appreciation to the Department for its numerous activities and the promotion partnerships on the issue, as well as for the support it provided to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, in March. The Department had been a key partner in the initiative to erect a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, he added.

FRANCESCA RIDDY-O'DOWD, representative of the European Union delegation, stressed the importance of the “final push” towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, as well as implementing the outcomes of the Rio Conference and elaborating a post-2015 agenda. All stakeholders must be engaged through the use of appropriate media, and with the complementary efforts of the United Nations Information Centres. She also looked forward to the Department’s continuing promotion globally of the Arms Trade Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), to help ensure their entry into force. Outreach should also support the universalization of The Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation.

Human rights issues, she went on, should feature high on the Department’s list of public diplomacy endeavours. She supported efforts to eliminate racial discrimination, and looked forward to comparable work to promote awareness for other important human rights matters, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues, and women’s rights. Given the importance of keeping tragedies around the world in the spotlight, she welcomed the Department’s attention to the situations in Syria, the Sahel, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As natural resources were often the “engines of conflict”, she welcomed the new website promoting awareness of a joint ‘UN-EU’ project to help countries improve management of those resources for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

New information and communication technologies, as well as social media, were rapidly being established as the most useful tools to inform the world about the Organization’s activities, and she fully supported efforts to maximise their use. The Secretary-General’s report had highlighted the Department’s very limited capacity, and she, therefore, urged it to use a lot more online resources as well as social media to expand its outreach to non-governmental organizations. The European Union’s member States were very confused by a “growing trend” in the Organization to exclude the participation of civil society in its work. That contradicted the core values of the Organization, and she urged the Department to expand its scope in that regard.

ARUN JAITLEY (India), associating himself with the Group of 77 and China, said United Nations Information Centres acted as an important interface between the Organization and local communities, improved awareness about the work of the United Nations and helped enhance its public image. They had, for example, given due publicity to the Millennium Development Goals Report 2013, and promoted local, national and subregional consultations on the post-2015 development agenda. The Centres should be strengthened, particularly in developing countries, through the provision of adequate budgetary support. It was important to raise local content and involvement in producing the Public Information Department’s publicity materials, and to involve local talent.

He said that the academic community could play a crucial role in promoting the United Nations agenda. It was important, therefore, to expand its partnerships with higher-learning institutions under its Academic Impact initiative, in which more than 1,000 colleges and universities from 120 countries had enrolled. India also supported efforts towards multilingualism in the Department, and was happy to note content being produced in several other languages, including some Indian ones. Many developing countries still lagged far beyond in technological terms, making it essential to produce materials in a wide spectrum of media.

RICARDO ALDAY (Mexico) noted the activities of the Department of Public Information, as well as of its Information Centres in promoting the Organization’s work through various media formats. Traditional media, however, remained the most important and vital means to reach a greater majority of people, especially in developing countries, and he stressed the need for the United Nations to continue to use the traditional media in its work. He was concerned over the growing digital divide and reiterated Mexico’s position for efforts to be hastened to address sustainable development issues. Mexico, on its part, had adopted a lot of constitutional reforms to enable its people access to information.

He called for greater effort to enhance multilingualism in all communications products, in particular, to increase in Spanish-language material and to disseminate information in all the six official languages of the United Nations, as well as for new media formats. Mexico sought a linguistic balance in print, television, and radio, and on the website, he said, noting that Spanish was the second most important and spoken language worldwide. His country, he added, was ready to contribute to strengthening the use of Spanish in United Nations communications products. Budgetary questions must not be a hindrance to the use of Spanish in all United Nations communications products, he said, calling for innovative strategies to address the issue and for resources to be channelled in a way that met the present realities.

SHARON YEO ([Singapore](#)), associating herself with ASEAN, recognised the “phenomenal impact” that information and communications technologies had made on the lives of billions around the world. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, there were more than 2 billion Internet users worldwide. As an enabler for social development and economic growth, all persons should have access to such technologies, but, unfortunately, the “digital divide” persisted in many parts of the world. The World Bank estimated that 60 per cent of households, mainly in the developing world, remained “unconnected”, which was a cause for grave concern.

She stressed the importance for the United Nations Department of Public Information to keep pace with technology and new media to meaningfully reach out to people worldwide. She drew attention to several digital inclusion efforts of Singapore to build a “connected and inclusive nation”. Among them was a 10-year master plan, which had been jointly developed by citizens and the private sector to connect individuals, communities, business and the Government. The digital age held great potential to be a “social leveller and economic enhancer”, she concluded, and the United Nations had a critical role to play in that regard.

YEHOR PYVOVAROV ([Ukraine](#)), associating himself with the European Union, stated that information today was the building block in overcoming political, and humanitarian crises. Communication between the United Nations and the global community was an important tool to bring key United Nations messages to the public. The Public Information Department and the United Nations had been working in a harmonized manner through joint activities, and Ukraine thanked the Department for its exemplary work in informing the public. He commended, in particular, the high quality and intensive work of the accreditation and media liaison team carried out with journalists during the sixty-eighth General Assembly session so far.

It was necessary, he added, that the Department highlight the work of the peacekeeping operations in conflict areas, in order to showcase that contribution of the United Nations and combat the stereotype of the Organization’s archaic methods for crisis management. The mission in Syria was a good example of the United Nations’ key role in damage control during a humanitarian crisis. Ukraine was an active contributor to various peacekeeping operations and it encouraged the Department to produce a series of documentaries that would demonstrate the complexity of peacekeeping and the courage of the men and women who participated in those operations. In that regard, his country welcomed the Under-Secretary-General’s efforts to reach out to the television and film community, so as to give the United Nations a “human face”.

GABRIEL ORELLANA ZABALZA ([Guatemala](#)), associating with the Group of 77 and China, said that the Department’s work was commendable and would enhance an effective and efficient information system. However, the digital divide remained an issue that must be addressed, he said, while noting that the use of traditional media remained useful in disseminating the Organization’s message. He also supported the call for the dissemination of information in all six languages, including on the United Nations website, and requested the Department to provide Member States with relevant statistics on the use of the website and the various social media platforms. Guatemala also insisted on the use of Spanish language in all United Nations communications products and the need to ensure language parity, and remove language “disparity”, for the sake of fairness and equal opportunities for all. He urged the Department to facilitate Spanish-language use in its products.

EDWIN YABO ([Israel](#)) stated that his country was grateful to the Under-Secretary-General for promoting Holocaust remembrance. The Outreach Programme emphasized the importance of education and was raising awareness about preventing ethnic and religious violence. This year, the Public Information Department had hosted the eighth Annual International Day of commemoration in memory of the Holocaust victims, he said, noting that his country was encouraged by the wide range of related activities organized at Headquarters, as well as through United Nations Information Centres worldwide. From Brazil to Beijing, for example, young people and teachers were hearing, in their own language, the story of a young boy, Petr Ginz, who had perished during the Holocaust.

The advent of new technologies, he added, had transformed the communications landscape and facilitated the rapid dissemination of information, and Israel had been among the first to embrace those developments. As far back as 1995, it had launched the “computer for every child” programme, which had resulted in the distribution of tens of thousands of computers. Over time, that project had evolved into a mission to provide a tablet for every child, with the aim of closing the digital gap and allowing Israeli youngsters from families with reduced means to receive the latest technology. At the same time, Israel was concerned about the Department’s Special Information Programme on the question of Palestine. The outcome of a General Assembly

resolution, it offered “a narrative of our region that was biased and misleading”. Israeli Government officials would remain obliged not to participate in its seminars until a more even-handed approach was adopted.

ABDOU SALAM DIALLO (Senegal) stressed the need for effective communication strategies to enhance the work of the Department in disseminating the activities of the United Nations and promoting partnership with both the people of various regions and the media. He commended the Department for its use of local languages in various regions to boost knowledge and promote understanding of the United Nations and its relevance to national and global issues. However, the use of television and radio remained important to reaching the majority, especially in Africa, he noted, calling for greater efforts to enhance multilingualism and address language disparity in disseminating the Organization’s message in all six official languages. He supported the Special Information Programme on the question of Palestine, as well as the role played by the Information Centres to inform the world population about such activities, as well as about the need for Palestinians to have their own State and achieve their alienable right to self-determination.

IHAB HAMED (Syria) stressed the need to put in place new information systems that would be more fair and loyal to the United Nations Charter principles. The United Nations should play a positive role in the dissemination of “a culture of peace,” and it was the task of the Committee and Department to bring that message to different regions of the world. Coverage of world events, as well as its analysis, had a great impact on society, and, therefore, Syria was concerned about the perspective of certain media outlets that attempted to distort information in the interests of small groups, serving to further the message of terrorism and violence. Thus, it was especially important for the United Nations to adopt credible information sources that conveyed messages impartially and independently.

He said that there were well-documented reports on the events unfolding in Syria, specifically on terrorist groups with ties to the Al-Qaida. The representative of the European Union had said that journalists had been killed in Syria. Those were killed by the very same terrorist groups and included Syrian journalists who were shedding light on the realities of those groups. His country also wished to stress the need for the Department to scale up efforts on the matter of Palestine, in line with General Assembly resolutions, given the increased suffering of the Palestinian people caused by the Israeli occupation of their Territories. Syria encouraged the Department to continue the annual information programme and to prioritize coverage of violations perpetrated by Israel. Regarding parity between official languages, there should be greater attention to Arabic, and inadequacies in the Arabic website should be remedied.

ELLEONORA TAMBUNAN (Indonesia), associating herself with the Group of 77 and ASEAN, said that freedom of the press should be upheld and protected in every possible way. Everyone was entitled to information, but that information must be balanced. She urged the Department to continue to play a vital role in sensitizing the global mass media on the need to project a culture of peace and tolerance, as well as to combat prejudice and division between nations, peoples and religions, and to eradicate the practice of stereotyping.

On Palestine, she said Indonesia recognized the excellent work of the Department and encouraged it to continue and to “spare no effort” in informing the world of United Nations’ endeavours to achieve peace in the Middle East. She welcomed the joint work done by the United Nations News Centre and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in creating a multimedia presentation about Palestinian refugees affected by the Syrian crisis and the Agency’s efforts to assist them. She also encouraged the Department to continue its programme of training of Palestinian journalists. She commended the Information Centres for taking the Organization’s message to the most remote places of the globe.

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