

## **Statement by the Representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the Western European and Other States Group (1 May 2001)**

Mr. Chairman,

I have the pleasure to speak on behalf of the Western European and Other States Group, that includes the countries of the European Union. Although some members will speak on a national basis, all have agreed with this statement.

First I would like to congratulate the new members of the Bureau on their election. They have the unenviable task of improving on the performance of their predecessors, but I think the new Bureau is well capable of doing that. I take the opportunity here to thank the former Under Secretary General Mr. Kensaku Hogen for all the work he has undertaken, while at the same time welcoming Mr. Tharoor as the Interim Head of DPI and thanking him for the statement he made on the activities of DPI.

This session of the Committee on Information will be very important for the future course of the public information by the United Nations and DPI in particular. I emphasise that our Group remains fully supportive of the important role that DPI has to fulfil in order as we continue to realize that the United Nations cannot achieve its purposes if the peoples of the world are not fully informed of the aims and activities of the United Nations.

We will have to take into consideration the technological changes that are reshaping the way information is distributed, shared and consumed, which continue to create new challenges for DPI. At the same time we must not forget the traditional tasks of DPI, as media such as radio continue to reach millions of listeners all of the world. We will have to determine what we think are the core activities of DPI. We will need to formulate policies to strengthen DPI's effectiveness and efficiency in order for DPI to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century and that the United Nations reaches out to key disseminators of information, especially the media and non-governmental organisations, utilizing the latest technologies. We need a DPI that realizes the slogan: "Global Vision, Local Voice".

Technological changes seem to be happening at increasing speed. What was deemed impossible a year ago, became technologically feasible today; mobile phones, portable computers, hundreds of satellite channels and millions of webpages are available for more and more people affecting and changing their lives and the manner in which they get their information. It must immediately be said that not all people are benefiting to the same extent of these developments. Regrettably significant groups of people are still deeply mired in poverty and lack basic needs such as water, education and health care and for them these technologies and the internet are still a distant dream. Although the internet cannot substitute a sound poverty eradication programme it is clear that developing and developed nations will need to work together to try to bridge this divide as otherwise poor nations could be left behind. On the approach to be pursued elsewhere in the United Nations very important discussions are taking place.

In this changing environment of new technologies and opportunities the United Nations will have to try to bring across its important message to as many people as it possibly can. This surely is a daunting task and it underscores the need for further and continued reform and improvement in the manner the UN disseminates its information. In our view reform is more than simply reducing costs and improving efficiency, although necessary, but the overall objective should be to enhance the effectiveness of UN information activities. It is necessary to move further away from the approach of trying to do it all, but to develop new strategies and approaches.

In our view it is essential for the United Nations to make communications and information strategies an integral part of the strategic management of the organisation. Not only DPI but also other UN departments can and must contribute to informing international audiences of the goals and achievements of the United Nations.

new technologies need to be addressed. The importance of the website will continue to grow in the future. There are costs involved in the further development of the site, as mentioned by the secretariat in its report. However we feel that the further development of the website

My group fully supports the initiative of the Secretary-General to develop UN-Houses, as bringing together physically and organisationally the public information activities of the UN in one region would greatly improve their efficiency and effectiveness and we call for an in-depth evaluation in this regard.

We need to support the development of the United Nations libraries, such as the Dag Hammerskjold Library, in becoming modern, integrated libraries accessible to all audiences.

Given the importance of peacekeeping operations, on which important discussions are ongoing, we feel that DPI should continue to strengthen its involvement in this field through active co-operation with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

We are concerned about hate media, an issue mentioned during the open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in the Security Council recently and we call on DPI to develop programmes in radio and television address in the harmful effects of hate media of peace and security

These are several of the proposals we will make during the discussions on the resolution in the coming weeks. I cannot emphasise strongly enough that all of these proposals aim at strengthening the work of DPI and improving its outreach to more and more communities all over the world. It is also worthwhile mentioning that my Group feels that we should intensify the dialogue with DPI during the year and not limit ourselves to a few meetings.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.