

Closing remarks by Mr. Shashi Tharoor, Interim Head of the Department of Public Information (24 April 2002)

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

I would like to express my appreciation to all the delegations who have spoken during this general debate for their kind words on the work of the Department, and to add my voice of welcome to yours, Mr. Chairman, for the contributions of our two newest Member States, Azerbaijan and Monaco, today. I was particularly encouraged by the support that so many of you have generously expressed for my leadership of the Department. Your endorsement of the broad thrust of the Secretary-General's Report on the Reorientation of UN activities in the field of public information and communications, as well as your general support for the remarks in my opening statement, will motivate my colleagues and me to continue our efforts to enhance United Nations public information and communications work.

My entire opening statement was devoted to the comprehensive review of the Department, as outlined in the Secretary-General's Report, which requested the Committee on Information to give general guidance and direction for the work of the Department. Through your statements in the general debate, you have provided us with a good understanding of your thinking on the direction in which the Secretary-General hopes to take the Department. The general debate has been characterized by insightful and constructive remarks by delegations. I have listened with great interest to your statements, and would now like to offer some further clarifications in connection with the issues and specific questions you have raised. I apologize that the extensive nature of the issues raised by distinguished delegates in this debate oblige

les délégations comme l'un de ses publics cibles, et de leur assurer les meilleurs services d'information possible. J'ai bien pris note, Monsieur le Représentant permanent, de ce que vous avez dit, et je le prends très au sérieux.

Practically all delegations, most recently the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania this morning, stressed that the United Nations should work to bridge the digital divide between the developed and developing countries and contribute to ensuring that the global information and technology revolution benefits the developing countries. In particular, the distinguished delegate of Venezuela on behalf of the G-77 and China, as well as Tunisia, underscored the importance of the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society and called for DPI to play a role in promoting it. I am pleased to report that the Secretary-General shares this view, and the Department is currently discussing ways and means to become more actively involved in the preparatory work for this event.

I would like to address several issues which delegations raised with regard to the Department's advocacy and outreach activities. Spain, on behalf of the European Union, requested clarification on the coordination and common strategies between the DPI and DPKO to strengthen the capacity of information components in UN peacekeeping operations. The distinguished delegate of the United States raised a related issue, pertaining to DPI's request for additional resources from the support account for peacekeeping, to provide responsibilities in support of peacekeeping operations.

With a view to implementing the Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations, known as the Brahimi Report, issued in August 2000, DPI and DPKO agreed in May 2001 on the division of responsibilities in strengthening the Secretariat's peacekeeping operations.

Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission. We are also working closely with DPKO and UNTAET to publicize the successful work of the UN in East Timor, to culminate with the independence of the Territory on 20 May. These are just two current examples of our collaboration with DPKO.

The distinguished delegates of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Syria and Yemen stressed the importance of the special information programme on the Question of Palestine. I wish to reassure them that the Department, at this time of tragedy and turmoil in the Middle East, is devoting high priority to this question. Within the framework of its special information programme, the Department is organizing an international media seminar in Copenhagen next month in cooperation with the Danish Foreign Ministry. Through this seminar, we hope to make our own contribution to the process of constructive dialogue, without which no durable peace can be established in the Middle East.

We appeal to all States to continue to support the Department's efforts through conferences and special sessions. In this regard, the Permanent Representative of Jamaica, on behalf of the C/Confidence Building (C/CB) Group, has expressed the support of the Group for the Department's efforts.

all those who expressed their appreciation for the work of information centres located in their countries, in particular the eloquent commentary we have just heard from the distinguished delegate of Ghana.

I should like to thank the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan for his intervention this morning and to repeat in public the regrets already conveyed directly to his delegation on the

Département aux membres du Comité lundi après-midi au cours duquel mes collègues ont parlé dans toutes les six langues officielles de l'Organisation!

The United States called for a close look at the Chronicle to ascertain whether the professional time and other costs involved in its production were justified in relation to its readership and impact, given that the magazine generally contains information that readers can easily find elsewhere, and also whether the human and financial resources should not be

a change in the name of the Department would not be in the spirit of General Assembly resolution 13 (I) of 1946. In considering such a change, we had taken the view that the use of the word "communications" in the proposed new name would demonstrate a more modern and pro-active approach to the dissemination of information. At the same time, the reference to "external relations" relates to the critical role which external partners (including NGOs, academic institutions and so on) must play in