

Statement by Mr. Alexander Marschik, Deputy Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations, on Behalf of the European Union (24 April 2006)

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Croatia, Turkey, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro and the EFTA country Norway, member of the European Economic Area as well as Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this statement.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to thank USG Tharoor and the Department of Public Information (DPI) for the timely presentation of concise and detailed reports requested by the Committee in its 27th session. These reports provide member states with a good overview of the work of the DPI and will be of practical use in our deliberations.

The European Union expresses its appreciation for the constructive interaction between the DPI and the members of the COI. DPI plays an essential role towards our shared objective of providing a focused information service of high quality to the UN family, media outlets all over the world and interested citizens.

The public outreach activity for the United Nations is a task of great importance. Without informing the world on the UN's activities and publicising the UN's achievements globally we cannot expect to have the support of all peoples for its mission. This is also the case when the UN is seeking to improve its effectiveness, redress shortcomings and pursue ambitious reforms.

Reorientation and Rationalisation of DPI's Activities

Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to note that the process of the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communication has been continued since last year's session of the Committee on Information, as described in the Report of the Secretary-General. This reorientation process undertaken over the last years should make it possible to further rationalise and optimise the activities of DPI, to maximise the efficient use of its resources, and to enhance the visibility and impact of its operations.

The European Union commends DPI for its efforts to develop a more strategic approach to promoting global awareness and greater understanding of the work of the UN in priority

of information; to exploit ongoing advances in information and communication technologies; and to build partnerships with civil society.

The EU acknowledges and encourages the Department's efforts to meet the complex demands of today's information society. DPI's mission statement rightly echoes the Millennium Declaration and focuses on key priorities such as poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the fight against international terrorism and the needs of the African continent. These objectives can be achieved only if the public is aware of the inter-linkages between development, security, human rights, justice and rule of law. The EU praises the efforts of DPI to preserve the photo and audiovisual archives of the UN, as the

United Nations Information Centres

Mr. Chairman,

The EU thanks Under-Secretary-General Shashi Tharoor for the latest report on the continued rationalisation of the network of UNICs.

The pursuit of regionalisation should take into account the circumstances in each region. In this regard the Western European model may not be applicable to all regions and, indeed, we understand from the report that DPI is envisaging alternative ways of rationalisation that do not primarily involve consolidation of existing UNICs but rather improvements in the coordination among the existing centres and with the local UN offices. We welcome and highlight DPI's commitment to pursuing genuine further reform.

As we have pointed out on numerous occasions, the European Union lent its full support to the Secretary-General's proposals for regional hubs in 2002 hoping for real medium to long-term benefits to the UN and to the peoples of the world. This decision forced a number of European countries to take the tough decision to close offices in their capitals.

We expected the plan for regionalisation to be advanced more vigorously than we have seen. We also expected other member states and regional groups to take equally tough decisions on UNICs in their own countries if circumstances warranted it.

To ensure that the quality of the UN's presence in the states under UNRIC's responsibility

