

AS DELIVERED

STATEMENT BY MR. KIYO AKASAKA  
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL  
FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION  
AT THE OPENING OF THE THIRTY-FIRST SESSION  
OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION  
MONDAY, 4 May 2009, 10:00 A.M.  
Trusteeship Council Chamber

Monsieur le Président,  
Délégués distingués,  
Mesdames et Messieurs,

C'est pour moi un grand plaisir de prendre part à la 31<sup>e</sup> session du Comité de l'information.



change, and disarmament and non-proliferation. The financial and economic crisis, including the promotion of the General Assembly high-level conference on this subject in June, has been added to our list of priorities. The Department identified Africa as a regional focus, and youth as a strategic audience. This strategic approach has involved the following elements: advance planning; new partners; clear organization and coordination; responsible use of resources; and impact assessments.

Second, we continue to pay close attention to providing timely, accurate, impartial, comprehensive, relevant and coherent information about the United Nations and its multifaceted aims and objectives. This is a challenging task, at a time when the media and general public demand quick and clear sound bites, but where our role is to inform the public about a complex array of issues – from the balance between peace and justice, to the nature of different conflicts, to the rights and responsibilities of individuals and States.

I would like to refer to one example that is a matter of concern to all of you. The Secretary-General met with the General Assembly this morning on the current state of play of the A (H1N1) influenza outbreak. The World Health Organization (WHO) has raised its alert

communications on this outbreak to the general public and the media, through the UN Communications Group platform. We are also playing an important role in communicating to UN staff, and to Member States.

The availability of instant information has required the Department to enhance its capacity to deliver UN public information effectively and efficiently. We must do the right thing – to be effective, and also do the thing right – to be efficient. By maximizing the use of the Internet and by putting it to creative uses, including for radio and television, DPI is now able to reach a much wider audience, as well as targeted groups, like students and young adults. For example, DPI's new multimedia page is showing noticeable growth in the number of registrations from college radio stations and similar outlets.

Fourth, through more evaluation, we are learning lessons that allow us to better design and sharpen our communications strategies and the way that we reach and engage the world's publics. These evaluations, with their measurable data, are also helping us to improve our internal systems and procedures. One example of a recent evaluation is of the

change and the unfolding financial crisis. Crucia





## The European Parliament and the United States Senat



Mr. Chairman,

I would like to briefly point out some examples of our new integrated approach to our outreach mandate, which I believe has strengthened our capacity to identify and develop new projects and alliances to serve the Organization and its Member States.

Two such projects have been initiated at the specific direction of the Secretary-General. The first is the Creative Community Outreach Initiative, in which we partner with the creative community to achieve our mutual goal of promoting peace and raising awareness of critical global issues. As part of this initiative, DPI has recently worked with the producers, writers and casts of two popular television series, *Law and Order*, and *Battlestar Galactica*. Both shows have helped in multiplying knowledge about key UN issues of human rights, child protection and reconciliation. It is our hope that this promising beginning with United States-based programmes will spur a truly global interest in such partnerships.

The second is the “Academic Impact initiative,” which seeks to bring institutions of higher education into a more coherent relationship with the United Nations, and with each other. The aim, again, is to jointly address issues with which the Organization is seized, and where scholarship, research and innovative learning can be vital inputs to finding solutions.

And as part of our proactive approach to helping facilitate the work of Member States, we have developed

I should also mention my appreciation for the guidance provided by delegations to our proposal to transform the *UN Chronicle* into a more substantive and thoughtful journal. In addition to the details on this project contained in the report and its annex, a non-paper has also been provided which responds to requests by Member States in greater detail.

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to draw your attention to another matter of concern to my Department -- that of the steadily rising operating costs of our information centres. Simply put, these costs are outpacing the budgetary allocations we receive.

I would like to express my gratitude for the generous contributions the Department receives from many Member States, particularly where UN information centres are concerned. At the same time, I appeal to those Member States that host UNICs, and where the centres are located in premises for which they pay rent, to consider the possibility of either providing the UNIC with rent-free premises or subsidizing a portion of the rent.

The voluntary support that Member States provide in connection with the work of UN information centres is invaluable to us and can significantly enhance the ability

