

Under Secretary-General Melissa Fleming

Statement to the 43rd session of the Committee on World Disasters and Emergencies

Monday 26 April 2021

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me be one of the first to congratulate you Ambassador Christian Espinosa and the new vice-chairs on your election. We look forward to working with you all from the Department of Global Communications, I also look forward to working with all of you and benefiting from your guidance and solidarity.

I would like especially to give my heartfelt thanks to the outgoing bureau – the Chair, Ambassador Omar Hilale; thank you for your generous words just now and all along the way for being a champion to our department at a time of new direction. The Vice-Chair, Ambassador Amal Mudallali; and the Vice-Chair and Rapporteur Oleg Nikolenko who has returned to his nation's capital to continue his service there. You have been steadfast supporters of our Department and cause, and for that we are grateful.

Thank you, distinguished deleohe

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Our interactive presentation will also highlight examples of how our global network of UN Information Centres, along with the Resident Coordinator offices with whom we work closely, are a critical instrument, creating original content across languages and then distributing that content in ways that connect with local audiences.

Beyond Verified, our broader COVID-19 communications have aimed to position the UN as the leading voice on the response to the pandemic. The coronavirus web portal in the six official languages, the extensive internal communications with staff, and the promotion of the Secretary-General's policy briefs on the various dimensions of the crisis are three examples of how we have worked to build credibility and trust by creating and distributing accurate and authoritative UN content.

the SG Oped in some of your national newspapers and that is thanks to our UNICs who have become masterful at placing these articles in the national media.

We will deploy a similar integrated approach to our communications for the key UN summits and conferences this year, including the Food Systems Summit in September and the upcoming high-level events on biodiversity, oceans, energy and transport.

This approach applies equally across our communications efforts in the fields of peace and security and human rights, from our support of the UN strategy and action plan against hate speech to the third and last phase of 'Service and Sacrifice', I know you've all appreciated this highly successful multimedia campaign to promote for UN peacekeeping.

Peacekeeping and peacebuilding and the entire prevention agenda remain central to our communications. This year we collaborated closely with other departments to stand up the communications capacity of the new UN mission in Darfur, UNITAMS, and in June we will hold another round of communications training for senior field staff on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse.

We are also applying our new a78-1 (o)-m 8.011 (y o)S-3 (n58-1 (o)-m 8.011 (y (pblcj -[akFd7 0.6

Successive General Assembly resolutions have asked the Library to draft a preservation proposal, and we put forward such a plan in the 2020 and 2021 reports to this Committee. The need is becoming increasingly urgent. We are asking for \$10.5 million, which will cover a five-year workplan, and would be grateful for any support that you could offer. My colleagues Maher Nasser and Thanos Giannakopoulos, the Chief of the Library, are here today and with us this afternoon during the interactive session and can provide you with more specifics. Thank you so much in advance for your support.

Distinguished delegates,

I am proud of the many ways in which our Department adapted to the pandemic to ensure that we could still deliver on our mandates. Our Visitor Services operations in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, for example, switched quickly to online tours and virtual briefings last year. And the various levers of our news operations ensured that all Member State meetings were still covered and the content from them amplified in multiple languages.

Producing fresh and original multimedia content on a daily basis, we were able to deliver balanced and timely information. Our efforts were rewarded with incredible growth in our multilingual audiences across platforms. The number of users that viewed our UN News website soared in 2020 with some 41 million users and more than 70 million page-views across the nine languages, compared to the previous year's 10 million users and roughly 25 million page-views. So, a really big surge. Audiences to the wider UN website also surged in the past year – between just July and November 2020, for example, the site registered more than 102 million page-views. And in the 12 months to March 2021, UN social media accounts gained 70.1 million organic engagements, far surpassing our targets for the period.

In short, the data illustrates that more and more people turned to us to be informed about global issues, at a time when we are living through a global crisis that is affecting everyone, everywhere.

One lesson we collectively learned was that we can reach so many more people through virtual outreach activities. At the same time, we know that we still lose something when we cannot reproduce the intangible connections generated in an in-person event.

This has been the dilemma faced by our flagship outreach and education programmes, whether on the Holocaust; the transatlantic slave trade; the Rwanda genocide; or the question of Palestine. In each case we modified our plans to conduct virtual dialogues, discussions, debates and even screenings.

In the next two weeks DGCis co-organizing two virtual events to which you are all invited. At 10 a.m. this Wednesday we are co-hosting a panel discussion on how to prevent the pandemic from being a media extinction event, especially for public interest media organizations.

Then, next Monday, to mark World Press Freedom Day^s the Chair also mentioned in his