

STATEMENT BY MR. DEREK O' BRIEN, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 55: *QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION AT THE SPECIAL POLITICAL AND DECOLONIZATION [FOURTH] COMMITTEE OF THE 67TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 25, 2012*

Mr. Chairman,

Let me begin by congratulating you on your election as Chairman of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee to the 67th General Assembly, as also the members of the Bureau on their election. We wish well and assure you of my delegation's full co-operation and support. I would also like to congratulate former Chairman, the Permanent Representative of Romania, Ambassador Simona-Mirela Miculescu for doing an admired job in conducting this committee during the 66th session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the report of the Secretary General on "Questions relating to information" (A/67/307), which provides updates on activities of the Department of Public Information from February to July 2012 in the areas of strategic communication services, news services and outreach services. We also welcome the report of the Committee on Information (A/67/21).

Mr. Chairman,

The DPI has played an important role in spreading awareness about the concept of sustainable development and mobilizing support for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio de Janeiro, June 20-22, 2012). We also note with satisfaction that DPI has organized various public information activities aimed at promoting important global issues like gender equality, development agenda beyond 2015, action against racism, and counter-terrorism.

Mr. Chairman,

It is heartening to note the collaboration of the DPI with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs in organizing a training workshop and an event to mark International Day of UN Peacekeepers. It is important that the Department seek to further deepen and strengthen its collaboration with DPKO and DFS in the coverage and projection of the most noteworthy activities of the UN: often done under extremely demanding circumstances, by UN peacekeepers in strife-torn lands.

We also reiterate the crucial role performed by the UN Information Centers in enhancing the public image of the UN, and in disseminating information, particularly in developing countries. These information outposts act as an interface between the United Nations and local communities, and they need to be further strengthened.

India urges the DPI to work closely with host countries in these efforts. We would also support adequate budgetary resources being made available to strengthen public outreach and ensure the effective functioning of Information Centers in the developing world.

We note with satisfaction that Information Centers have collaborated with local partners in promoting important global issues. We would like to encourage them to further deepen their collaboration with local community organizations, while working to advance important UN agendas.

Mr. Chairman,

While concurring with the importance of capitalizing on new information technology and social media like Twitter and Facebook, for reaching new audiences, we would also like to stress the importance of using 360 degree communication, involving the widest range of methods, to make the work of the DPI accessible to all. It is important not to treat the digital media, which in many countries caters to a different segment of society, differently from traditional media, as that would be divisive. The end product offered by DPI needs to be dispensed through the widest spectrum of media channels, ranging from webcasts and podcasts to traditional means of communication like radio, television and print, which remain of especial relevance to the developing world. These so called traditional means of communication remain of tremendous importance in these parts of the world, and must not only continue to be used, but further strengthened, for they provide the means to reach out to the vast majority of mankind.

Among traditional media tools, radio holds a special place. It is still recognized as a major source of information, and is widely used in the developing world. We are of the opinion that there is need to raise awareness about the importance of radio, and enhance international cooperation for improving and diversifying the content of radio broadcasts. We welcome the proclamation by the 36th session of the UNESCO General Conference to celebrate February 13 as the 'World Radio Day'.

Mr. Chairman,

We appreciate DPI for its outreach programs on remembrance of the Holocaust, victims of Slavery and Transatlantic Slave Trade, and International Jazz Day.

We also commend DPI for its activities under the UN Academic Impact (UNAI) initiatives, aimed at interacting with institutions of higher learning and think tanks in order to build stronger ties between the UN and its diverse global constituencies. UNAI's events and initiatives on issues ranging from Human Space Flight and Jazz Day to Mandela International Day and current issues and its global response, organized in partnership with organizations and institutions, such as the Young Changemakers and Raindance, the Brookings Institute, and the Queens Museum of Arts, present an

excellent example of creativity and innovation in advancing the goals set by the United Nations.

India has always been in the fore front of supporting these initiatives, and has been a committed contributor to the activities of UNAI. India recently co-sponsored the event on the International Jazz Day, organized under the auspices of the Committee on Information on April 30, as part of the UNAI program on “Unlearning Intolerance”, and has also made a financial contribution of US \$ 100,000 to the UNAI this year.

A number of Indian Universities are members of the Academic Impact initiative. I am particularly delighted to note that the University of Calcutta, one of our oldest and most cherished, renowned universities, has been designated as Academic Hub by the UN to develop teaching-learning expertise in Peace and Conflict Resolution Studies under the Academic Impact initiative.

Taking India’s engagement with the UNAI to the grassroots, a youth NGO “Young Changemakers and Raindance”, collaborated with the UNAI in organizing an event in Mumbai to mark Mandela International Day on July 18, 2012. Donations were collected to finance scholarship for school children living in slums.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by conveying India’s good wishes to the DPI. We assure our continued support in fulfilling its charter, especially in its endeavor to project the work of the UN.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS