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Chair: Mr. García González (El Salvador)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information
(*continued*) (A/68/21 and A/68/315)

1. **Mr. Díaz-Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that his delegation continued to support the work of the United Nations information centres, encouraged the Department of Public Information to strengthen their work, and reiterated its appreciation for the information centre in Buenos Aires, which disseminated the voice of the Organization in Spanish throughout Argentina and Uruguay.

2. Argentina was proud to have initiated the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations, whose charter reflected the commitment of the Spanish-speaking States at the United Nations to promote, in the context of multilingualism, the Spanish language as an official language of the United Nations and a working language of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council. However, the failure of the Secretary-General's report to include an in-depth analysis of multilingualism in the dissemination of information was a serious concern, especially as it had been acknowledged that the goal of language parity had yet to be achieved. More details in that regard were urgently needed, including statistics, disaggregated by language, on the use of different Department products and services.

3. While welcoming the Department's expanded use of social media in all official languages, he noted that all such initiatives and products were merely supplementary to the United Nations website, which they did not replace and whose widening linguistic disparities they did not resolve. Nevertheless, he praised the Department's efforts to begin providing live coverage of every General Assembly and Security Council meeting in the six official languages plus the language of the speaker.

4. Although Argentina was delighted that Spanish had become the second most frequently used language on United Nations websites and social networks, it remained very concerned about the continuing imbalance between the Spanish-language and the English-language content available on those websites, and about a recent noticeable decline in the quality of the translation of website content into Spanish. The Department needed to better adapt the linguistic contents of its websites to current public demand.

5. Argentina was grateful for the Department's announcement of a pilot initiative to issue press releases in Spanish, though the budgetary restrictions affecting that initiative were regrettable. The General Assembly had requested the Department to find "creative" solutions and avoid budgetary debates that diverted attention from the mandate of full linguistic parity. His delegation was also encouraged that the draft resolution before the Committee clarified the importance of ensuring the equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations and the responsibility of the Secretariat in mainstreaming multilingualism in all its communication and information activities, within existing resources on an equitable basis.

6. Prior to taking part in further bilateral consultations, his delegation proposed that existing resources should be reallocated based on actual public demand, including that of the Member States; priority in allocating budgetary resources for new information products should be given to the United Nations website; and the existing mechanisms, editorial criteria and length of press releases should be adapted so as to open the way for their issuance in the remaining official languages.

7. Argentina commended the excellent Spanish-language work of the United Nations News Centre, and hoped to receive further information on the possible merger of the Headquarters and United Nations Office at Geneva library facilities, an initiative requiring careful study by Member States.

8. In conclusion, he called for creativity and equity in the search for ways to prevent budgetary issues from becoming a hindrance, and praised Department staff for their willingness to respond to enquiries and requests from Member States in a transparent, efficient and highly professional manner.

9. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) said that while the revolution in information and communication technology (ICT) had turned the world into a "global village" and fostered awareness of the activities of the United Nations, a digital divide nevertheless persisted between developed and developing countries. Despite the Department's mastery of new ICTs, it had resisted the temptation to go "all-digital" and had taken a balanced approach by continuing to prioritize the use of such traditional media as radio, television and newspapers, which still constituted the most accessible

information sources in developing countries such as Burkina Faso. His delegation also saluted the Department's efforts to preserve and strengthen multilingualism in the United Nations system, especially on the Organization's websites. It encouraged the Department to continue to ensure the accurate, impartial and balanced dissemination of information and to strengthen the capacities of the United Nations information centres in order to allow them to mobilize and inform public opinion on the ideals of the Organization.

10. The information centre at Ouagadougou was the sole centre in the Sahel region, covering Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad. For several decades, it had played an important role in disseminating information and broadcasting warning and prevention messages concerning natural and humanitarian disasters. It also worked to combat illiteracy by providing local populations with United Nations documents in their own languages. In the area of peacekeeping, the centre assisted Burkina Faso in preparing the armed forces for peacekeeping missions. Furthermore, the Ouagadougou centre improved the dissemination of information by maintaining exemplary partnerships with the country's press organizations.

11. Burkina Faso had always supported the preservation and strengthening of information centres in the most vulnerable countries, where new information technologies were not yet common and there was a real need for information. His delegation saluted the work of the United Nations Communications Group Task Force in the implementation by Member States of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. To be effective, however, information centres still required basic resources.

12. **Mr. Borje** (Philippines) said that his delegation noted the accomplishments of the Department in making the United Nations more accessible to the world in the face of daunting challenges. The Internet had broadened the United Nations audience, making available countless documents, records, photographs and videos from virtually any wired or wireless device. Thematic issues had been highlighted on its media and news platforms, raising awareness of key issues across the full spectrum of the work of the Organization and its Member States, as well as of the very real risks to life and limb faced by its peacekeepers and the

sacrifices they made to help keep the world secure and stable.

13. Efforts to continue harnessing the power of the Internet, develop ICT to further amplify that reach, and strengthen the Organization from within must be sustained. However, it was important to note that while millions around the world had become connected by digital bridges, millions more had found themselves separated from the rest by digital gaps preventing their access to much-needed technology. The reality of that digital divide underscored the continuing importance of traditional media, upon which many people continued to rely. As radio was an invaluable yet affordable tool for reaching, informing and involving those most in need of access to information, support for United Nations Radio should continue. Given the importance of the Department's outreach services via United Nations information centres in further publicizing the work of the Organization, continuing budget support for United Nations communications activities would also remain vital.

14. The Philippines saluted the information centres' efforts to establish partnerships with schools and civil society to enhance information campaigns. Experience confirmed the worth of partnerships with educational institutions specializing in ICT that harnessed the talent and energy of youth, thereby investing in a future generation fully aware of the contributions of the United Nations and its foundational values and principles, including the shared goals of international peace and security, the rule of law, human rights, sustainable development and inclusive growth.

15. The usefulness of United Nations news services was strengthened by the accessibility of United Nations websites. Improving content availability in all six official languages of the Organization would further enhance that accessibility, but should not compromise the integrity of the information provided. Care must also be taken to protect United Nations websites and internal communications systems from attempts to sow disinformation under the cloak of the United Nations via ICT, as the Organization relied increasingly on social media to connect to a more actively information-seeking audience.

16. Of equal importance was the need to involve and connect with those surmounting physical disabilities. The Philippines welcomed efforts to make United Nations documents more accessible to persons with

disabilities, and viewed the establishment of accessibility centres as a concrete and positive step in that direction. Computer stations with adaptive and assistive technology had opened up opportunities for greater understanding for an important global constituency.

17. Finally, as the Department broadened its work, the importance of cooperation with Member States through the permanent missions in New York should be underscored. The Philippines was ready to work with the Department in identifying further avenues for collaboration, particularly in capacity-building in public diplomacy and in web connectivity.

18. As a member of the Committee on Information, the Philippines would continue to be an active partner of the Department in efforts to make the Organization more accessible to the world through information, and was committed to helping ensure the creation, through accurate and timely information, of a global constituency empowered for positive change.

19. **Mr. Bamba** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the realization of the goals of the Department was an evolutionary process, requiring continuous adjustment to the Organization's changing peace and security objectives.

20. In implementing its post-crisis reconstruction programme, Côte d'Ivoire enjoyed a dynamic and fruitful relationship with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), and especially with ONUCI-FM, commonly known as "peace radio", which supported the reconciliation process and efforts to consolidate peace in the country through broadcasts on politics, economics, and social and public-health issues.

21. Aware of the strategic importance of communications for Côte d'Ivoire, President Ouattara was modernizing the country's audiovisual sector via migration from analog TV to digital terrestrial television (DTT), and by opening up the audiovisual spectrum. An interministerial working group had prepared a report on migration to DTT and a strategy for implementation by 2015, while decrees defining the rules of competition and conditions for use of the designated frequencies had been signed prior to the release of a formal call for expressions of interest.

22. His delegation was particularly interested in the current draft resolution on information in the service of

humanity, given its recognition of the barriers to information excellence and harmonization around the world and of the ways and means of bringing about the birth of a new world information and communication order.

23. Over the past year, to address the need for a dynamic information and communication policy conforming to international standards, the Government had vigorously pursued capacity-building for journalists and a broader professionalization of communications participants; developed local training through ongoing support for the Institute for Communications Sciences and Technology in Abidjan; strengthened protection for journalists practising their profession; and accelerated the nationwide coverage of Ivorian radio and television.

24. The Department's professionalism and expertise merited encouragement and support. However, the success of its efforts to familiarize the public with the goals of the United Nations and to highlight the successes of the Organization depended on the work of its partners in the press throughout the world, especially those in developing countries, and on the participation of all countries.

25. **Ms. Edwards** (Jamaica) said that the Government of Jamaica was committed to strengthening its ICT sector and was implementing several initiatives aimed at improving training and access throughout the country. Over half of Jamaicans had Internet access, and the island ranked fifteenth in the world for broadband speed. However, technology education remained essential for informing people of opportunities and providing the skills they needed to compete globally. In developing countries especially, greater use of technology in education would provide a competitive advantage and significantly narrow the digital divide between developed and developing countries. In that connection, her Government had launched a programme to distribute thousands of tablet computers to educational institutions across the island, free of charge.

26. Jamaica fully supported United Nations efforts to use affordable emerging technologies to facilitate information sharing, collaboration and internal communication. Social media were also cost-effective tools for reaching millions of users in all the official United Nations languages. Significant progress had been made in digital dissemination of United Nations

knowledge products by such means as webcasting. Her delegation welcomed those developments, but noted that disparities among Member States with regard to reliable access to updated applications adversely affected their ability to access information from the Secretariat. A balancing between the use of modern technology and traditional means of communication remained essential.

27. Social and development issues, peacekeeping and political matters, and public and civil society outreach were all areas in which the United Nations was making tremendous contributions to the lives of millions, but a full range of media was needed to make that message heard. It was therefore commendable that the United Nations was making full use of pop and TV icons as well as media and music festivals to disseminate its message.

28. Her delegation saluted the unveiling of the winning design for the permanent memorial to be erected at the United Nations in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The Department had played a pivotal role in fulfilling the outreach mandate of the General Assembly's annual resolution calling for increased focus by the Organization on the issue of transatlantic slavery. Jamaica was particularly pleased with the Department's promotion of the permanent memorial initiative.

29. Jamaica also commended the work of the Department in its messaging and outreach plans regarding the Millennium Development Goals and its efforts to raise awareness of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. The public dialogue on the post-2015 development agenda was of the utmost importance to her delegation.

30. She thanked the Department for the timely background information on its website relating to the observance in 2014 of the International Year of Small Island Developing States; the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States was also scheduled for that year. She urged the Department to work with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to promote the year's activities and assist Member States in their own promotional activities at local levels. Jamaica also welcomed the sterling work of the Department in redesigning and updating the United Nations portal on the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the use of various forms of media to

convey information about United Nations initiatives in that area.

31. The role of the information centres in improving understanding of the work of the United Nations was of great importance. Surveys of those centres and their outreach activities in 2012 showed that nearly nine out of 10 respondents had gained an improved understanding of the United Nations as a result of those activities, signalling that the Organization's outreach efforts were having a meaningful impact. In that regard, she also noted the successful work of the Resident Coordinator's Office in Kingston, Jamaica, in the commemoration of such occasions as International Women's Day, World AIDS Day, and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

32. In closing, her delegation expressed its appreciation to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library for providing the online documentation system that was an invaluable resource for research and the effective functioning of small missions such as that of Jamaica.

33. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the recent commemoration of World Press Freedom Day had been an opportunity to focus on the essential nature of the information disseminated by the Department. That information had to be correct in order to help societies throughout the world promote sustainable development in line with their aspirations. To mark the twentieth anniversary of freedom of the press in Bahrain, the director of the local United Nations information centre had met with some 300 local journalists to discuss the important role of the Department in raising public awareness on Bahrain and on the work of the United Nations in that country.

34. The information centres were all the more important because their easy accessibility made them the most effective way of raising public awareness; support for their activities needed to continue so that they could continue that work in the future. The centres needed also to continue to be responsive to the needs of the public.

35. Enormous progress had been made in ICT, but there was still a need to overcome the digital divide between developed and developing countries. The international community was trying to establish a new world order based on the free exchange of information; the best way to achieve that goal was to promote cooperation in developing information technology infrastructures, particularly in developing countries,

and to implement the human resources infrastructure needed to facilitate access to ICT. To achieve that goal, any new systems introduced had to be of proven utility; the role of traditional media should not be ignored, as they were still the most important and widely used information channels in many countries without access to the Internet.

36. Those responsible for the work of the Department should continue to bear in mind the overriding need to inform as many people as possible about the United Nations and its activities, as well as the importance of effective dissemination of information on key issues. He commended the Department's culture of improved performance, based on lessons learned from past practice, and the effective promotion it had recently carried out on a variety of important issues and themes.

37. **Ms. Sánchez-Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that, while thanking the Secretary-General for his report, her delegation regretted the report's failure to mention the communications support provided by the Department for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament; in Cuba's view, the exposure of the general public to the discussions on that topic in multilateral bodies, through the information provided by the United Nations, could make an important contribution to nuclear disarmament. The Department should do more in that regard, and also intensify its efforts regarding the questions of Palestine and decolonization, in accordance with the pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly.

38. While the potential benefits of information technology for economic development, education, medicine and other areas were enormous, its possible use for purposes contrary to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, as for example for global espionage, must be rejected and denounced. Such espionage infringed on human rights, the right to privacy and the right to information, and violated the principle of State sovereignty and international law. The United Nations General Assembly should take the lead in discussing those issues.

39. The benefits of ICT fell far short of reaching the majority of the world's inhabitants. According to recent data from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), only a third of the world's population had had Internet access in 2012; Internet penetration rates in developed countries were almost three times the rates

in developing countries, reflecting the persistent digital divide. And even if ICT access were universal, how would it help the enormous numbers of illiterate adults, children with no access to education, people living in extreme poverty, the malnourished, or those without electricity?

40. Meanwhile, close to \$1.75 trillion was being spent on armaments worldwide, when only a small part of that expenditure could eliminate the digital divide. Developed countries continued to be the owners of information services, consolidating and manipulating the content of the information provided. More rational use and socially aware application of information technologies were needed, aimed at shrinking not only technological divides but social divides as well.

41. Cuba supported the role of the Committee on Information in promoting the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding. It was necessary effectively to face such challenges as the use of ICT in ways inimical to the principles and purposes of the Charter by making global Internet governance more democratic and multilateral, while respecting all human rights of individuals and peoples, including the rights to development, self-determination, peace, information and privacy.

42. United Nations information centres around the world, particularly those in developing countries, must continue to play a central role in the balanced dissemination of information, taking due account of the audience to whom it was directed. The use of broadcasting mechanisms, particularly traditional media, must continue to be maximized as the means of providing information to illiterate populations in the countries of the South. Cuba supported the long-standing request that the Department should publish daily press bulletins in the six official languages, and also welcomed the creation of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations in support of multilingualism.

43. The Government of the United States of America continued its aggressive policies against Cuba in the radio-electronic area, in open violation of the international legal norms governing relations between States, as well as of ITU rules and regulations. Having publicly declared that the goal of that policy was to change the political, social and economic system built

by the Cuban people in exercise of their self-determination, it had targeted Cuba with illegal and subversive radio and television programming, affecting the normal functioning of Cuban radio and television stations duly registered with ITU. The ITU Radio Regulations Board had urged the Government of the United States to eliminate that harmful interference, and had ordered the Radiocommunication Bureau to monitor the situation and take action consistent with the procedures laid down in the Radio Regulations. Since the inception of that aggression, the Cuban Government had denounced its illegality in various forums, including ITU. Her country had the right and duty to denounce those illegal acts and to demand their immediate cessation. The decision as to the type of information that the Cuban people wished to receive was the sovereign right of Cuba alone.

44. **Mr. Toro-Carnevali** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that access to information in his country was guaranteed under its Constitution, as was the right of its citizens to be provided with timely and truthful information by their Government. The use of ICT had been democratized under Venezuelan law on that basis, and in his delegation's view, such non-discriminatory access to ICT should be provided in all countries. Draft legislation regulating the use of information technology in public administration had recently been approved, with a view to improving government services and fostering transparency in the public sector and the full exercise of citizens' rights, as well as promoting the free development of information technology, guaranteeing universal access to it and ensuring that its adoption would strengthen participatory democracy and public administration.

45. The task of creating a new world information and communication order was hampered by the control exercised by large media corporations over the flow of information, allowing them to distort its content according to their own political, economic and cultural interests and damaging democracy as a result. In Venezuela, for example, commercial television had been controlled by a powerful oligopoly for decades. In redress, the Government had recently introduced incentives for alternative community media and non-profit independent groups to set up public communications platforms and services, and some 500 such services already existed throughout the country.

46. His delegation saluted the efforts of the Department in the area of multilingualism, but saw

much remaining to be done. The establishment of the Group of Friends of Spanish would help strengthen multilingualism at the United Nations, but information about the Organization's activities should still be disseminated in all six of its official languages.

47. Finally, he noted that unequal access to information throughout the world, along with growing concentration of the means of information exchange in the hands of a few countries and transnational groups, were leading to cultural colonization of the countries of the South. He therefore urged the Committee on Information to address the imbalance in information between developed and developing countries, and called for the promotion of an information democracy ensuring the protection of cultural autonomy.

48. **Mr. Selim** (Egypt) said that it was important to monitor the work of the Department and how it disseminated information on the United Nations. Egypt appreciated the work of United Nations information centres in the Middle East; they provided important information on the region, but required resources to do so. To guarantee public access to the message of the United Nations throughout the world, it was necessary to underscore the importance of multilingualism and the equal value of each of the six official languages of the United Nations.

49. His delegation invited the Department to continue to implement its programme on Palestine, in order to raise awareness of the suffering of the Palestinian people under occupation and the human rights violations to which they were subjected. His delegation was grateful to the Department for its efforts to improve its working relationship with the Member States, and expressed the hope that the Department would continue to improve awareness and understanding throughout the world and promote the role of the United Nations in the service of humanity.

50. **Mr. Zaytsev** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the efforts of the Department to increase global awareness of United Nations activities. It welcomed the qualitative and quantitative growth of the Department's information work, and its broader use of traditional as well as new forms of media. He noted with satisfaction that the United Nations web portal continued to develop in all six official languages, and was particularly pleased at the significant growth over the past few years in the number of hits on the Russian-language United Nations News Centre and associated

social media pages. He was also grateful for the swift and substantive posting of messages in the Russian-language version of the United Nations Twitter account and United Nations Radio.

51. It was important to step up the use of different online resources, including social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, which were a good way to introduce a wider public to the work of the United Nations, and also provided better access to information on the activities of the Organization. In that context, he underscored the educational role played by United Nations information centres, particularly the one in Moscow.

52. He welcomed the fact that meetings of the General Assembly and Security Council had been broadcast live in the six official languages and in participants' languages since June 2013. He hoped that in the future, statements delivered in the General Assembly and Security Council would also be available in the six official languages and as sound recordings. Of no less importance was the Department's work in the creation of an inventory of digitized text, photographic and video archives of the Organization.

53. While aware of the importance of new media, he drew attention to the ongoing need for traditional media, especially radio, in supporting the United Nations presence, as many countries did not yet have wide access to the Internet. He thanked the United Nations Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit for its close and productive cooperation with the media in providing journalists with accreditation and access to United Nations events and meetings. He also drew attention to the need to guarantee that multilingualism and parity among the six official languages were maintained in United Nations information activities, in particular on the Organization's websites and international broadcasts. Assistance should also be provided to the Department to organize Language Days at the United Nations. In conclusion, he expressed full support for the draft resolution on questions relating to information, and called on the Member States to implement a new world information and communication order.

54. **Ms. Al-Mughairy** (Oman) said that the Department should broaden the scope of information products and services to include those that could be effectively provided by Member States and the global public in support of the Organization's goals; she

encouraged it to initiate more partnerships in which the Organization's ideals were expressed by those whom it sought to serve, rather than solely by the Organization itself.

55. Cooperation between the Department and United Nations system entities should be enhanced at the field level, particularly through the network of information centres. She hoped the centres would initiate robust and strategic communications groups with the participation of all United Nations offices and agencies working in-country, which would become the key interlocutors with host Governments in defining and projecting messages on their common goals. She requested the Under-Secretary-General to provide an overview of the information centres at the next session of the Committee on Information, as well as further details on his proposed new entity for knowledge and learning, given the already-formidable reputation of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library as a valued component of the Department.

56. Nurturing constituencies of engagement should go beyond the dissemination of public information to include substantive support for the core concerns of the Organization. The Department could discreetly and unobtrusively support ongoing political processes and even provide impetus for those that had yet to start, both through the organization of high-level events and through engagement with the academic, non-governmental and other relevant sectors. In that context, her delegation looked forward to the revival of the Department's annual NGO conference, and also commended the World Federation of United Nations Associations, an important civil society partner of the Organization.

57. **Mr. Mbalati** (South Africa) said that his delegation commended the Department's contribution to the recent special events concerning the Millennium Development Goals, and called for a greater focus on raising awareness of the plight of the poor as part of ongoing campaigns in that regard.

58. His delegation was encouraged by the Department's efforts regarding the United Nations information centres, the establishment of which should take into account the local dynamics of the host countries. He particularly encouraged the Department to work with the Government of Angola to establish a centre in Luanda to serve the lusophone countries of Africa, and praised the Department's work in raising

international awareness of the plight of the Palestinian refugees and the situation in the Middle East.

59. While praising the Department's efforts to disseminate information through new media and social networks, he urged it to continue focusing on the traditional media that remained the main platform for communication in developing countries. He also encouraged the Department to continue its important work in commemorating important events that reflected humanity's quest for a better future, and extended his delegation's gratitude for the support of the United Nations and the Department for the recent observance of Nelson Mandela International Day.

60. **Mr. dos Santos** (Brazil) said that although the Department's use of new media was praiseworthy, it should bear in mind the importance of traditional media in reaching the two thirds of the world's population that lacked access to the Internet. The role of public information activities in peacekeeping operations was particularly important, as successful fulfilment of mandates required fluid and constant contact with the local population via effective dissemination of information. The impartial information provided by United Nations Radio in post-conflict countries was instrumental in consolidating internal political processes. An effective combination of traditional and new media was needed to address pressing issues on the international agenda, as were creative schemes to address recent language and information gaps.

61. Brazil continued to support the work of the information centre in Rio de Janeiro, which had been disseminating information on United Nations activities for over six decades, and called on the Department to work with Member States to ensure needed support and strengthening for the network of information centres as a whole. It also encouraged all States that hosted such centres to provide them with rent- and maintenance-free premises for their operations, thereby enabling the Department to concentrate its limited funds on outreach and public information services.

62. His delegation extended its thanks and appreciation to the Portuguese Unit of United Nations Radio for its work in Portuguese-speaking countries, despite limited human and financial resources, and reiterated its appreciation for the Department's fostering of innovative grass-roots initiatives for peace in the Middle East in connection with the special information programme on the question of Palestine.

63. Although the primary objectives of ICT should be strengthening peace and promoting international understanding, those technologies had been deliberately used for purposes contrary to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Illegal interception of communications and data from citizens, businesses and members of Governments constituted a grave violation of human rights, particularly the right to privacy, and breached the principles guiding relations among countries. Brazil urged Member States collectively to prevent the use of cyberspace as a weapon of war through espionage, sabotage and attacks against systems and infrastructure of other countries, and considered that the General Assembly should play a leading role in the discussion of those matters.

64. **Mr. Khazaee** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation noted the importance of the role of the Committee on Information in examining United Nations public information policies and activities, and stressed the need for closer cooperation and coordination between the Department and that Committee.

65. The recent dramatic increase in acts of violence and extremism required collective action and cooperation by the international community. In his statement at the opening of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, the Iranian President had called for a "World Against Violence and Extremism (WAVE)"; while underlining the role of the United Nations in promoting tolerance and non-violence, the Iranian delegation encouraged the Department to undertake a new initiative to promote the WAVE concept.

66. In light of the need to bridge the gap between developed and developing countries in public information and communication, his delegation strongly advocated a new order based on the free, balanced and transparent flow of information. The United Nations should proactively create an indispensable environment for universal access to ICT for all nations. In that connection, the Islamic Republic of Iran strongly condemned the recent decision by certain Western countries to ban the broadcasting of several Iranian satellite television and radio channels as a gross violation of international law and also a flagrant contradiction of claims about defending the freedoms of speech and of the press. It strongly urged those countries to respect the principles of freedom and democracy and to reverse that decision immediately. It also called on the relevant United Nations organs,

especially the Department, to promote and protect the freedoms of opinion and expression.

67. His delegation urged the Department to continue its efforts to encourage and facilitate dialogue among civilizations, and to promote that concept in the activities of the United Nations in various fields. It looked forward to the report of the Secretary-General requested in General Assembly resolution 60/4 of 2005.

68. The humanitarian and economic situation of the Palestinian people had seriously deteriorated, and his delegation wished to underscore the Department's responsibility to raise international awareness regarding the question of Palestine, with a view to shedding more light on the negative impact of the illegitimate occupation of that Territory.

69. The United Nations information centres played a crucial role in disseminating the message of the United Nations, particularly in the developing world, and must be strengthened. To that end, his delegation encouraged the Department to continue working closely with host countries, and stressed the importance of making adequate financial resources available to the Department. His country also supported the emergence of a more linguistically equal world, in which information was disseminated not only in the official languages of the United Nations, but also in local languages, such as Persian, that were widely regarded as the roots of great cultures and civilizations.

70. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation had appreciated the observance of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers as a tribute to the professionalism, dedication and courage of the men and women serving in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and in honouring the memory of those who had lost their lives in the cause of peace. His delegation took great pride in the fact that 112 Bangladeshi peacekeepers had made that supreme sacrifice while wearing the United Nations blue helmet, and reiterated its long-standing request that those sacrifices should be commemorated by the Department, as for example in the erection of a memorial wall at the United Nations bearing the names and countries of those who had lost their lives in the cause of global peace and stability. He called on the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Public Information to take the necessary initiative in that regard, and appealed to fellow Member States to support it.

71. His country also supported the Department's efforts in the area of climate change; despite its nearly non-existent contribution to global warming, Bangladesh faced potentially devastating consequences from even a small rise in sea levels, as did millions of people in other low-lying countries. He therefore called on the Department to apprise the global community of that growing threat, and called for greater international cooperation and support for developing countries directly affected by rising sea levels. The Department should use video presentations to publicize the threat faced by coastal States and small island developing countries as a consequence of global warming.

72. Given Bangladesh's history of defending the right of peoples to speak their mother tongue, his delegation had always supported the observance of International Mother Language Day at the United Nations and elsewhere. At a time when many native languages were under threat of annihilation because of globalization and economic disintegration, he called for more meaningful worldwide observance of that day to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and the principle of multilingualism. Although his own native language, Bangla, was the world's seventh largest in terms of the number of speakers, the United Nations radio programme in that language had been discontinued in 2012. He was pleased that it had recently been reinstated, but called for adequate staff support to be restored for it as well. He also expressed his delegation's support for the activities of the United Nations information centres worldwide, and for the work of the Department.

73. **Mr. Launsky-Tieffenthal** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that he was encouraged by the many positive comments made by members of the Committee. In response to enquiries by a number of delegations on the issue of parity among the six official languages, he said that his Department was collaborating closely with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management to find a creative way forward, and would inform the Committee regarding the suggestions made by its members on that issue. A complete report, including a strategy on multilingual press releases, would be presented at the next session of the Committee on Information. The Department cherished the partnership it had forged with Member States, especially those on the Committee on Information; that partnership served as the cornerstone of the

Department's communications work, and was based on a bond of mutual understanding and obligation that would be further strengthened through ongoing consultations and dialogue.

Action on draft resolutions contained in the report of the Committee on Information

74. **The Chair** invited the Committee to take action on draft resolution A, Information in the service of humanity, and draft resolution B, United Nations public information policies and activities, contained in paragraph 26 of the report of the Committee on Information (A/68/21). The two draft resolutions, which had no programme budget implications, had been adopted by the Committee on Information by consensus. He took it that the Committee wished to take action on the two draft resolutions jointly.

75. *It was so decided.*

76. *Draft resolutions A and B were adopted.*

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.