



# General Assembly

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## Committee on Information

### Forty-fifth session

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda\*

### Consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General

## Activities of the Department of Global Communications: campaigns and country operations services

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report, prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution [77/128 B](#), provides a summary of programmes implemented by the Department of Global Communications, from 1 July 2022 to 31 January 2023, as part of its strategic communications services aimed at disseminating the work of the United Nations to a global audience.

The campaigns and country operations services subprogramme is one of three subprogrammes of the Department and is implemented by the Campaigns and Country Operations Division (formerly the Strategic Communications Division), which develops and carries out strategies for communicating United Nations messages on key issues. The Division also manages the Department's network of field offices, the United Nations information centres.

The activities under the other subprogrammes of the Department, namely news services, and outreach and knowledge services, are described in separate reports of the Secretary-General ([A/AC.198/2023/3](#) and [A/AC.198/2023/4](#), respectively).

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\* [A/AC.198/2023/1](#).



## **I. Introduction**

1. In its resolution [77/128 B](#), the General Assembly took note of the reports of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Department of Global Communications submitted for consideration by the Committee on Information at its forty-fourth session ([A/AC.198/2022/2](#), [A/AC.198/2022/3](#) and [A/AC.198/2022/4](#)) and requested the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Committee on the activities of the Department.
2. The Department hereby submits the information requested on its campaigns and country operations services.
3. The present report covers the activities of the Campaigns and Country Operations Division (formerly the Strategic Communications Division) of the Department, from 1 July 2022 to 31 January 2023, with respect to its implementation of strategic communications campaigns on key issues, including on the impact of the armed conflict in Ukraine, combating the climate crisis and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. The report also includes a review of how the network of United Nations information centres has implemented the United Nations global communications strategy and strengthened outreach worldwide through stronger cooperation with United Nations resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams.
5. In addition, the report illustrates how the Department has worked to lead and coordinate crisis communications and counter misinformation and disinformation, including as part of its response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

## **II. Responding to the coronavirus disease pandemic**

6. During the reporting period, the Department of Global Communications, together with the World Health Organization (WHO), continued to serve as the communications lead advising the United Nations COVID-19 Crisis Management Team at the principal level. The Department coordinated the United Nations system communications response to the COVID-19 pandemic through the crisis cell – co-chaired by the Department and WHO – of the United Nations Communications Group, which consists of United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes as well as regional commissions.
7. The Department chaired meetings of the crisis cell during which representatives of the United Nations system agreed on strategy and messaging. The Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications regularly briefed the Crisis Management Team on the latest monitoring reports and on the activities of the Department to amplify WHO and wider United Nations messaging. Alongside WHO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Department supported communications on the high-level event, hosted by the Secretary-General, on ending the COVID-19 pandemic through equitable access to vaccines, tests and treatments, which was held during the high-level segment of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly in September 2022.

## **III. Crisis communications coordination at Headquarters and in the field**

8. The Department of Global Communications continued its work to identify crises and emerging reputational risks and to strengthen its response to those situations by ensuring coordination on communications across the United Nations system.

9. The Department activated crisis communications procedures multiple times, with crisis cells on emergencies and reputational issues established and maintained under the auspices of the United Nations Communications Group. The crisis cells, chaired by the Under-Secretary-General, ensured that colleagues at the country, regional and global levels of the United Nations system applied a consistent approach to strategy and messaging. The cells disseminated key messages, shared information on media monitoring, analysed misinformation and disinformation, provided a bridge to relevant technology platforms and identified opportunities for the United Nations to speak with one voice. The Department connected communications staff in country offices to the fast-track reporting portals of major social media platforms such as Meta and Twitter. This enabled United Nations staff to report problematic content, such as hate speech, more quickly to the platforms.

10. On 4 October 2022, the Department activated a crisis communication cell on the United Nations response to the situation in Haiti, where a new outbreak of cholera and a dramatic deterioration in security required strong messaging and outreach to ensure continued international support for both the people of Haiti and humanitarian workers on the ground, including United Nations staff.

11. The Department continued to operate its crisis cell concerning the response to the armed conflict in Ukraine, through which it developed and maintained key messages on the situation in the country and on measures to address the ripple effects of the conflict on food, energy and finance, such as the Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (the Black Sea Grain Initiative) and the memorandum of understanding between the Russian Federation and the Secretariat of the United Nations on promoting Russian food products and fertilizers to the world markets.

12. The Department also continued its crisis cell on the situation in Afghanistan, through which it promoted the rights of women and girls and highlighted dire humanitarian needs.

13. Smaller crisis groups that were convened by the Department brought together relevant actors to share communications updates and approaches on situations of political protest and fragility, and the global surge in monkeypox (mpox) cases, among other aspects.

14. Throughout the reporting period, the Department delivered training sessions on crisis communications to United Nations information centres, resident coordinator offices, designated officials and the United Nations System Staff College.

#### **IV. Building trust and combating misinformation**

15. The Department of Global Communications continued to implement its COVID-19 communications response initiative, on the theme of science, solutions and solidarity, to promote reliable information and address misleading and harmful narratives. Through the Verified initiative, the Department worked with civil society groups, media broadcasters, activists and companies around the world to gain access to mainstream audiences and vulnerable groups, including those with lower rates of uptake of vaccines, and to deliver trustworthy content in support of global efforts to stop the pandemic. The thematic focus of the Verified initiative was also expanded to reach communities with regard to issues that had been aggravated by the pandemic, such as hate speech, mental health issues and gender-based violence.

16. Between 1 July and 31 October 2022, the Verified initiative reached more than 18.2 million people and engaged over 500,000 people globally through a series of online activities and live events, with efforts focused in particular on audiences in Brazil, India, Kenya, South Africa and Trinidad and Tobago.

17. In India, the Verified initiative included the launch of two campaigns aimed at increasing vaccine uptake among migrant workers and tribal communities in New Delhi, the capital city, and in the state of Tamil Nadu. The campaigns, through which community leaders were engaged to share content with the above-mentioned groups, reached more than 18,700 people, online and offline, through audiovisual content, which helped to ensure that the messaging was accessible to communities with lower literacy rates. By expanding its network of trusted messengers in India to include health-care workers, doctors, scientists, content creators, journalists, resident welfare associations, sanitation workers, corporate leaders, automobile drivers, youth leaders and influencers with millions of followers, such as Mithila Palkar and Satshya Tharien, and engaging those partners to share content addressing misinformation on COVID-19, the Verified initiative reached over 3.6 million people in the country.

18. In Africa, the Verified initiative engaged with celebrities and content creators to achieve its goals. In Kenya, it partnered with Nairobi-based celebrity DJ Grauchi to remind people about the benefits of the COVID-19 vaccine. That collaboration included two performances that garnered a total of 454,000 views on social media, reached over 190,000 people and engaged more than 5,000. In South Africa, the initiative partnered with content creator Mashudu Modau and celebrity DJ Frypan, who used their social media channels to reach more than 71,800 people with COVID-19 messaging related to employment, entrepreneurship and music.

19. The global network of United Nations information centres also played a key role in sharing Verified content with audiences at the national and local levels. To support COVID-19 vaccination efforts, the United Nations information centre in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, produced a video in collaboration with the Brazilian screenwriter KondZilla, the music group Trilogia da Escócia and Equipe Halo, a group of scientists and health-care professionals who volunteered their time to address COVID-19 vaccine concerns and misinformation. The video garnered 300,000 views on TikTok and YouTube with the help of more than 100 influencers who contributed to its promotion.

20. The United Nations information centre in Canberra arranged for visuals from the Verified campaign to be displayed on 250 buses and light rail carriages, where they could be seen by the approximately 1.3 million people using bus transportation and 287,000 people commuting by light rail in the city on a monthly basis.

21. In November 2022, in partnership with the instructional website wikiHow, the Verified initiative launched a free digital literacy course entitled “How to spot and counter disinformation online”. Available in six languages – Czech, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish – the course was aimed at helping audiences to recognize disinformation narratives and stop their spread.

22. A multilingual digital literacy course on combating misinformation online – launched in 2021 by the Verified initiative in partnership with wikiHow – continued to help audiences to learn how to identify and resist misinformation and how to fact-check and respond to false content. The course also provided advice on how and when to take a break from social media altogether.

23. In line with the recommendation put forward by the Secretary-General in his report entitled “Our Common Agenda” (A/75/982), the Department continued its work on developing a global code of conduct to promote integrity in public information. The Department began a desk review of threats to information integrity across the world and of applicable regulatory efforts occurring at the national and regional levels. The Department also intensified its exchanges with stakeholders in the field of information integrity, including think tanks, academia, media institutions and the United Nations system. In addition, the Under-Secretary-General undertook speaking engagements and published a series of articles on Medium and other platforms addressing information integrity, misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.

24. The Department also continued to engage with major social media platforms, such as Meta, TikTok and Twitter, to advocate transparency and promote action to address disinformation, hate speech and freedom of expression, including in crisis situations, during which the spread of harmful content posed an especially urgent challenge. The Department also worked to ensure a coordinated, consistent and effective approach across the United Nations system in its discussions with the platforms.

## V. Communications campaigns

### A. Sustainable development

25. The advancement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals continued to be a priority for the Department of Global Communications during the reporting period. During the opening of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly in September 2022, the Department provided support for several high-level conferences and reports calling for stronger action to achieve the Goals.

26. Together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Department supported the media outreach and digital campaign for the Transforming Education Summit, held on 16, 17 and 19 September. The Summit received global media coverage in over 123 countries and in the six official languages of the United Nations. Briefings organized with the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education generated coverage on the themes of education and finance.

27. The Department also supported the stakeholder consultation and meeting of the General Assembly, held on 24 and 25 October, in preparation for the United Nations Conference on the Midterm Comprehensive Review of the Implementation of the Objective of the International Decade for Action, “Water for Sustainable Development”, 2018–2028, due to be held in March 2023, by amplifying key messages on the Sustainable Development Goals website of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and on social media platforms. As the communications lead for the Conference, the Department of Global Communications continued to work on strategy, planning, and media and digital amplification.

28. With support from the Department, the 2022 edition of *World Population Prospects* – the largest recurrent project of the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs – was launched in July 2022 with a press conference and media interviews with experts. The key findings contained in *World Population Prospects 2022: Summary of Results* – in particular that the world’s population would reach 8 billion by November 2022 – received extensive coverage by many media outlets, including the Associated Press, *The Economist*, *The News International* (Pakistan), *The Nigerian Observer* and *The Washington Post*.

29. For the high-level opening segment of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Department developed and managed a web page dedicated to promoting key events, including the Transforming Education Summit, the Sustainable Development Goals Moment, held on 19 September, and the general debate, held from 20 to 26 September. Available in all six official languages of the United Nations, the web page received more than 100,000 page views over a half-month period in September.

30. The high-level events during the opening of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly also helped to generate strong online traffic to the flagship Sustainable Development Goals website – maintained by the Department – which recorded 3.5 million page views in September alone.

31. Despite competing global events during the high-level opening segment of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, rates of engagement on United Nations social media platforms was in line with those achieved during the same period in previous years. Social media engagement and reach on the Sustainable Development Goals Moment and the Transforming Education Summit were boosted significantly through amplification by influencers such as the poet and activist Amanda Gorman, the music group Blackpink and the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Messenger of Peace Malala Yousafzai. From 19 to 25 September, influencer content generated approximately 739,400 engagements and around 4.4 million video views. The speech delivered by the Secretary-General at the opening of the general debate garnered approximately 1.4 million engagements and 895,800 video views, with users responding strongly to his comments on climate change and the need for peace.

32. The Department further supported the high-level segment of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly by hosting a virtual Sustainable Development Goals media zone, which featured videos on climate action, biodiversity loss and digital technology for education that had been submitted by member organizations of the Sustainable Development Goals Media Compact, along with a “Year in review” video of highlights from 2022. The media zone enjoyed strong media engagement in various countries, including China and Japan.

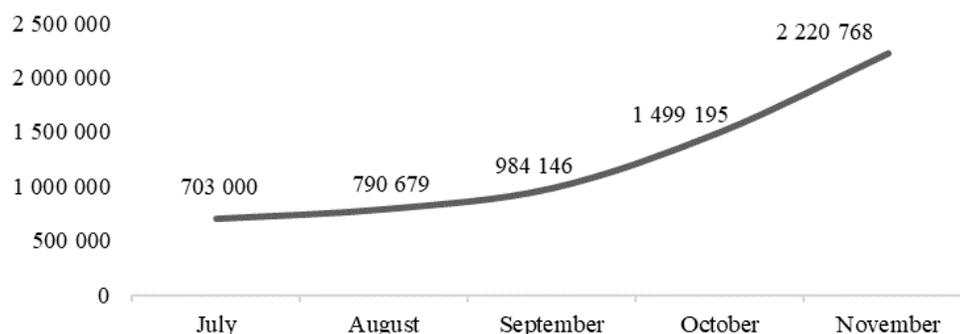
## B. Climate action

33. Climate action remained a communications priority for the Department and continued to attract high interest from media and across digital platforms. Against a backdrop of worsening weather-related disasters around the world, statements by the Secretary-General on the need for climate action resonated strongly across print, broadcast, online and social media. This included his appeal following the floods in Pakistan in late August 2022, his call for a tax on fossil fuel profits during the high-level segment of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly in September and his remarks at the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held from 6 to 20 November in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

34. The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh contributed to a steep increase in visitors to the United Nations climate action website maintained by the Department, accruing more than 2.2 million views in November 2022 (see figure I), up from 950,000 in the same month of the previous year.

Figure I

### Monthly page views of the climate action website, July–November 2022



35. The heaviest traffic to the United Nations climate action website was recorded during the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, including

an especially large increase in users of the Arabic-language version. Between 5 and 21 November 2022, the website received almost 1.4 million page views (810,000 in English, 256,000 in Arabic, 236,000 in Spanish, 43,000 in French, 26,000 in Chinese and 14,000 in Russian) – almost three times the 550,000 page views for the comparable 17-day period of the previous year, during the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

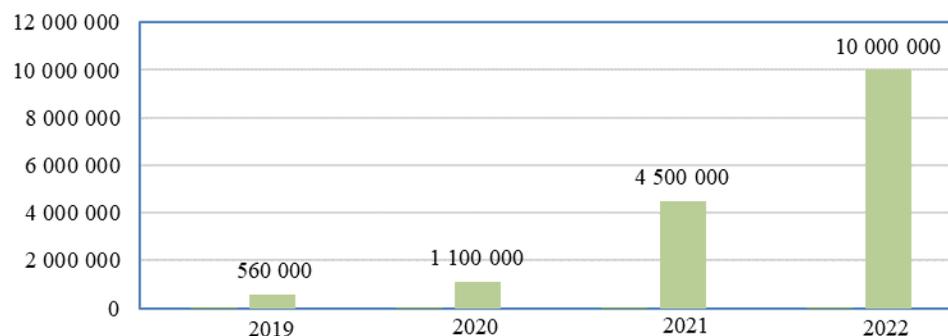
36. The Department was on the ground in Sharm el-Sheikh with a multilingual team from United Nations Headquarters and United Nations information centres to conduct media outreach and produce daily video, news, and web and social media content. The remarks of the Secretary-General at various events at the Conference were widely picked up by wire services and major international outlets, including his address at the high-level opening, on 7 November, and his statement at the launch of the report of the High-Level Expert Group on the Net-Zero Emissions Commitments of Non-State Entities, on 8 November.

37. A range of multilingual social media materials produced for the Conference, including videos, Instagram reels and stories and other products, highlighted key messages on the need for more ambitious climate action. Content featured youth climate voices from around the world and showcased climate solutions and innovations. High-profile influencers were engaged to amplify climate messaging, in particular for younger audiences, and content from across the United Nations system was amplified through “co-tweets”, or co-authored tweets, and Instagram collaborations. More than a hundred posts about the United Nations Climate Change Conference performed well across United Nations platforms, generating 300,000 engagements in total.

38. During the reporting period, the Department continued to run climate campaigns on social media. Since June 2022, the ActNow campaign has expanded its reach through WhatsApp, engaging global audiences through automated messaging that provides tips on shifting to a more sustainable lifestyle. By the end of 2022, the ActNow campaign had reached the milestone of 10 million individual climate actions logged, up from 4.5 million at the end of 2021 (see figure II).

Figure II

**Cumulative number of individual climate actions logged through the ActNow campaign**



39. United Nations information centres also contributed to mobilizing climate action through campaigns and initiatives. In Japan, the United Nations information centre in Tokyo worked with some 130 partners from the Sustainable Development Goals Media Compact to promote the “Promise of 1.5°C” climate campaign, aimed at fostering behavioural changes by individuals and organizations to keep alive the goal of limiting the global average temperature rise to 1.5°C. The Tokyo information

centre also promoted the “Promise of 1.5°C” campaign on-site at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh.

40. The United Nations information centre in Cairo was present at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh to manage events at the pavilion of the United Nations country team in Egypt, including a 10-day programme of panel discussions aligned with the thematic days of the Conference and involving at least 16 different United Nations agencies. The events were livestreamed on the United Nations Egypt Facebook page and are available to view on demand.

41. The United Nations information centre in Pretoria worked with the United Nations Communications Group and the South African National Editors’ Forum to host a media round table, ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, on the theme “Reporting on climate change: inform, educate, persuade and influence”, held on United Nations Day (24 October).

42. On 2 July, the Visitors’ Service of the United Nations Office at Vienna engaged over 130 children through games and activities based on German adaptations of a children’s version of ActNow, the Climate Action Superheroes. The programme was carried out in association with the summer holiday games of 2022, a family festival organized by the city of Vienna and attended by some 10,000 people.

43. The United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels and the United Nations information centre in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, published German and Portuguese versions of the English-language web page of the climate action website providing guidelines for communicating on climate change, produced by the Department. The guidelines were aimed at the general public and offered tips on the production of effective content.

### **C. Human rights**

44. During the reporting period, the Department continued to work on the United Nations #NoToHate digital campaign, aimed at raising awareness of the global phenomenon of hate speech and encouraging audiences to take a stand against hateful rhetoric. In October 2022, the multilingual United Nations hate speech website was enhanced with new material on groups vulnerable to being targeted by hate and hate speech. Customized key messages were developed in relation to events such as the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime (9 December) and Human Rights Day (10 December). The United Nations global social media accounts regularly featured materials in nine languages – the six official languages of the United Nations plus Hindi, Kiswahili and Portuguese – including with regard to key moments on the United Nations calendar and when warranted by political or social developments. #NoToHate campaign content posted on United Nations global accounts generated more than 420,000 engagements and 485,000 video views from more than 320 posts across various platforms. The campaign was localized in some 40 United Nations information centres and field presences.

### **D. Peace and security**

45. The Department used its strong social media presence, including the United Nations corporate accounts with some 61 million followers in nine languages, to update social media users in real time on the United Nations response – at Headquarters and on the ground – to the armed conflict in Ukraine. United Nations posts related to the conflict continued to achieve some of the highest rates of

engagement on social media of any topic in 2022, with users responding to calls for peace, the protection of civilians and the need to avert a nuclear catastrophe.

46. Content on the establishment in July of the Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports (the Black Sea Grain Initiative) performed above average on United Nations social media platforms, with relevant posts among the top 10 most engaging posts from 22 July to 31 August. The Department produced social media content to explain the Initiative and its impact, including by highlighting the countries to which grain had been shipped. The Department will continue to highlight the successful outcomes of the Initiative to social media users in nine languages and across United Nations platforms.

47. Brief no. 3 of the Global Crisis Response Group on Food, Energy and Finance, entitled “Global impact of war in Ukraine: energy crisis”, which was launched by the Secretary-General on 3 August, received widespread media coverage, including by prominent outlets such as *The New York Times*, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), the Associated Press and *The Independent*. The brief, which focused on disruptions to the global energy market in the context of the armed conflict in Ukraine, called for a windfall tax on the fossil fuel industry’s record profits in 2021.

48. On 12 October 2022, the fourth phase of the Service and Sacrifice campaign, thanking troop- and police-contributing countries for their service in United Nations peacekeeping operations, resumed with coverage of the following countries: Armenia, Gambia, Greece, Liberia, Peru, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Türkiye and Zimbabwe. The Department worked with Member States and media to promote the campaign, which received wide coverage by social, print and broadcast media globally and in the countries concerned. On the United Nations corporate social media accounts, the campaign generated 144,000 engagements between 12 October and 13 December. A total of 63 countries have been covered by the campaign since it began in 2018. The Department also continued to work with United Nations information centres and offices of the resident coordinator system, in cooperation with peacekeeping operations, to promote the work of personnel from individual troop- and police-contributing countries.

49. In November, the Department conducted the eighth iteration of training for senior staff from United Nations agencies, funds, programmes and peacekeeping operations on communicating on sexual exploitation and abuse. Since training began, approximately 130 personnel have participated, gaining skills in communicating on sexual exploitation and abuse in a sensitive and transparent manner in accordance with the United Nations victim-centred approach.

50. On 3 and 4 November, the Department organized the annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, which addressed the following three themes: “Honouring the legacy of Shireen Abu Akleh: protecting journalists covering the conflict”, “Forgotten stories in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: how political news eclipses coverage of economic challenges” and “Young journalists: opportunities and challenges”.

51. On 31 May, the Department announced that it had renamed its annual training programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists the Shireen Abu Akleh Training Programme for Palestinian Broadcasters and Journalists, in honour of the Palestinian-American Al-Jazeera reporter who was killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory on 11 May. The training programme, which was held from 8 November to 9 December 2022, provided six Palestinian journalists from the West Bank, Gaza and the diaspora with hands-on skills training in media-related topics along with in-depth exposure to the work of the United Nations.

## E. Africa

52. Through the *Africa Renewal* digital magazine and its monthly newsletter and social media platforms in English and French, and through selected articles published in Chinese and Kiswahili on the website of the magazine, the Department continued its communications support for African social and economic development and peace and security with content promoting the work of the African Union, the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

53. Issues covered during the reporting period included addressing the climate crisis, promoting trade and empowering women and youth. As part of its focus on the work leading up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, *Africa Renewal* showcased the expertise of African women climate experts through an op-ed series covering topics such as climate justice for people with disabilities, how climate action in Africa's cities could help to address historic inequities and the role that women play in ensuring water and food security for all. African experts interviewed included the President of the African Development Bank Group; the Africa Director and Special Adviser to the high-level champions for climate action; and the Special Envoy on Youth of the African Union. The magazine also published contributions from the Special Adviser on Africa to the Secretary-General and the Director of the Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Management Division of ECA. Coverage of the Conference included climate-focused interviews with the United Nations resident coordinators of Egypt, Gabon, the Gambia, Madagascar and Rwanda.

54. During the reporting period, *Africa Renewal* concluded its series on the work of female African Permanent Representatives to the United Nations by interviewing the Permanent Representative of Malawi.

55. The magazine continued its coverage of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, including the launch, in October 2022, of the Guided Trade Initiative, a pilot initiative involving eight African countries – Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tunisia and the United Republic of Tanzania – aimed at testing the effectiveness of the agreed preferential trading operations and policies. *Africa Renewal* also covered the second anniversary of the commencement of free trade, which was on 1 January 2023, and published an article on the environmental case for the African Continental Free Trade Area by the Chief of the Regional Integration and African Continental Free Trade Area Cluster in the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa of ECA.

56. *Africa Renewal* coverage of the Transforming Education Summit included an interview with the Minister of Education of Sierra Leone and profiles of three award-winning teachers in Ghana.

57. During the reporting period, the syndicated news features service of *Africa Renewal* continued to expand. A total of 110 articles from the magazine were republished in English, French and Kiswahili some 500 times in more than 130 media outlets in 15 countries, including Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, France, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States of America and Zimbabwe.

58. The *Africa Renewal* website enjoyed an average of 158,855 visits per month, with a near-equal number of male and female visitors to the website. The highest number of visitors (47.4 per cent) were in Africa, followed by North America (21.9 per cent) and Europe (15.8 per cent). Those aged 18 to 24 (30.5 per cent) were the most frequent visitors of the website.

## **VI. United Nations information centres and information services**

### **A. Delivering strategic and crisis communications support to the United Nations system at the field level**

59. The United Nations information centres played a key role in supporting the efforts of the Department of Global Communications to ensure a strategic approach at the country level that addressed both local and global communications priorities in a coordinated manner. Information centres implemented the global communications strategy by leading or participating in United Nations communications groups in support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework as well as other specific campaigns and issues. For example, the information centre in Mexico City promoted a campaign that highlighted the work of the United Nations in Mexico. In response to the humanitarian crisis caused by floods in KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa, the information centre in Pretoria developed and executed a crisis communications plan to raise public awareness of the plight of affected communities. At the regional level, the information centre in Canberra organized a one-week planning and training retreat for the Pacific United Nations Communications Group that included capacity-building in the areas of social media, misinformation, crisis communication and partnerships, as well as sessions on developing a two-year workplan of common priorities and key messages for 2023–2024. Support for crisis cells set up by the Department was also provided, for example, by the United Nations office in Kyiv and the information centres in Moscow and Ankara, which provided daily media reports.

60. Collaboration continued between the Department and the Development Coordination Office to strengthen communications coordination and planning. One aim was to ensure that administrative procedures related to the integration of 44 of the 59 information centres were optimized to support field office communications. That included beginning the development of a framework for workflows, roles, responsibilities and information technology systems for administrative processes between information centres and the Office. A regional retreat for 57 United Nations communications officers from across Africa and from the Office was held in September and addressed the application of the global communications strategy. The retreat followed two previous regional sessions for Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe and Central Asia, respectively.

### **B. Building the capacity of United Nations information centres**

61. In May, the Department held a workshop in Geneva for the directors of its largest 25 information centres; in November, it held another in Vienna for the heads of its 34 smaller information centres. The objective of the workshops was to develop a coherent, integrated global communications network that optimized the field structures and capacities of the Department by aligning them with the needs of its global communications strategy. The workshops provided interactive training on communications challenges and included brainstorming sessions on implementing the global communications strategy and communications priorities at the local level. The sessions also provided an opportunity to assess the status of integration with resident coordinator offices and explore ways of improving the effectiveness of field offices. The directors of the information centres agreed to provide direct support to national officers heading smaller centres – a role previously carried out by the Department – so as to help further integrate country-level communications into a coherent global network aligned with strategic and crisis communications needs. Doing so should also aid in better positioning directors of information centres to provide high-level strategic and crisis communications support to resident coordinator offices in their region.

62. The Department, in collaboration with the Development Coordination Office, also held regular webinar sessions for communications officers from information centres, resident coordinator offices and country teams around the world. In 2022, 21 webinars were held, each with an average of 136 participants. The webinars provided strategic guidance on annual and monthly communications priorities and on global communications campaigns, as well as capacity-building in areas such as social media, crisis communications, storytelling and solutions journalism. The Department held an additional 13 webinars focused on administrative and programmatic capacity-building for all of its field office staff.

### **C. Promoting multilingualism**

63. During the reporting period, audiences around the world were kept informed of key aspects of the work of the United Nations through the grass-roots efforts of the United Nations information centres – which have increasingly been producing, translating and adapting information materials and conducting online and in-person briefings – Model United Nations conferences and social media campaigns in local languages. Information centres produced or translated materials in 134 languages – an increase of more than 100 per cent compared with the 66 languages reported in 2017. About 90 per cent of those languages were Indigenous languages from Africa, Asia and the Americas, thereby demonstrating the concerted efforts of the centres to reach the populations of some of the most diverse and vulnerable groups.

64. Simultaneous and sign language interpretation have also become increasingly effective tools for reaching wider audiences. The information centre in Kathmandu, for example, provided Nepalese sign language interpretation during celebrations to mark International Youth Day (12 August).

65. To achieve the goal of multilingualism, United Nations information centres often rely on cooperation with external partners. For example, the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels maintained websites in 13 languages with support from local universities and civil society actors, who provided assistance with translations. The information centre in Beirut continued its partnership with Radio Liban through a live weekly Arabic talk show “Hawa El Shabeb” targeting young audiences. The centre also partnered with professional athletes from Lebanon and the wider region for its ongoing podcast series #TheUrbanAthletePodcast, which included a special World Cup episode covering the United Nations “Football for the Goals” initiative. Sport was also the focus of a pilot social media campaign in Arabic, launched in November by the information centre in Rabat, to address hate speech. The information centre in Dhaka collaborated with the Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication to broadcast United Nations information in Bangla, including a Bangla version of the message of the Secretary-General to mark the International Day of Clean Air for blue skies (7 September), which was disseminated to 18 community radio stations for broadcasting.

### **D. Innovating to reach and mobilize wide and diverse audiences**

66. During the reporting period, United Nations information centres worked closely and in innovative ways with United Nations country teams, resident coordinator offices and specialized agencies, as well as with government and other partners in civil society, to raise awareness of the work and communication priorities of the United Nations, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

67. The information centre in Mexico City collaborated on United Nations Day (24 October) with the Resident Coordinator in Mexico and representatives of several

United Nations agencies to produce content on the Goals broadcast by the 1,600 radio stations of *La Hora Nacional*, a national public service radio programme transmitted on public and private radio stations. Concurrently, the information centre facilitated the publication of an op-ed by the Resident Coordinator in the newspaper *El Universal*, which has a readership of over 40 million. The article, entitled “Una agenda común para rescatar a los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible y forjar un nuevo pacto mundial” (Our common agenda to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals and establish a new global contract), was also posted on *El Universal* social media platforms, where it received 2,000 engagements. Similarly, to raise awareness in Cameroon of the Goals, the information centre in Yaoundé and the country team collaborated with the municipal council of Buea, the capital of the south-west region of the country, and the association Jeunes en Action pour le Developpement Durable to organize a series of activities on the theme “2022 Global Week to #Act4SDGs”. Activities included “plogging” (an activity combining jogging with picking up litter), training municipal authorities and youth volunteers on localizing the Goals, organizing inter-college competitions, and training prison inmates on sustainable projects for life after prison. In addition, in September, the information centre organized a sustainable development open day that brought together some 15 youth associations working on development projects.

68. In October, the United Nations office in Tashkent collaborated with Westminster International University in Tashkent, the non-governmental organization Yuksalish, the Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan and the United Nations system present in the country to organize an exhibit of more than 90 works of art created by students from 16 universities. The exhibit, which included paintings, visual installations and photographs promoting the Goals, was attended by high-level government officials, senators, parliamentarians and representatives of the international community and civil society. The Academy of Arts is planning to display additional exhibits related to the Goals in 2023.

69. In October, in collaboration with the national United Nations communications group in Lebanon, the information centre in Beirut conducted a social experiment to educate citizens about the extreme hunger and food insecurity experienced by approximately 25 per cent of the Lebanese population. The experiment featured a special food truck that offered a 75 per cent discount. When customers received only a tiny portion of their order, many initially expressed outrage, demanding their money back; after having been made aware of the situation faced by many Lebanese people, many expressed regret and shame for their initial reaction. The corresponding video, posted on United Nations social media accounts, resulted in almost 40,000 engagements.

70. In Namibia, the information centre in Windhoek worked to promote quality education and gender equality through the Connected African Girls Coding Camp initiative. The hybrid training camp, which brought together 100 Namibian women and girls between 12 and 25 years of age, with hundreds more joining virtually from across the African continent, was aimed at providing participants with foundational skills, especially in technology-based fields. The information centre, which worked with ECA in partnership with the Government of Namibia, the Resident Coordinator Office, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the International Telecommunication Union and Telecom Namibia, supported the event by scheduling media interviews, providing branding and on-site communications support and developing social media content.

71. In Brazil, on 7 August, the information centre in Rio de Janeiro launched a new phase of the Verified initiative’s “ParaCadaUma” (For Every Life) campaign, which was aimed at raising awareness of Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls and of the devastating impact of violence against women and girls in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The information centre

worked with local celebrities to project the names of women affected by violence on the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue overlooking the city. The event was broadcast live on social media, and a video produced by the information centre for Instagram generated 125,796 views and engaged 12,849 users. The information centre also worked with local public transport authorities to place campaign graphics on train and subway doors and campaign videos on transportation monitors. The promotional materials reached an estimated 1.8 million commuters daily.

72. Furthermore, to highlight the need to end violence against women, the information centre collaborated with the Rio Art Museum, the Museum of Tomorrow and the Amazon Theatre to illuminate their buildings as part of the national “August Lilac” campaign. The institutions also amplified the Verified #ParaCadaUma hashtag on their social media platforms. Related promotional material was also disseminated on the Rio de Janeiro light rail system, on a bicycle lane in São Paulo and through Eletromidia display monitors located in commercial and residential buildings. The information centre worked with other United Nations agencies, as well as with 10 Brazilian digital influencers, women’s rights advocates in particular, to promote the “August Lilac” campaign on their various social media platforms, with a number of posts generating over 100,000 views.

73. The United Nations information centres worked to raise awareness of environmental degradation. The United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe collaborated with Junk Kouture – the world’s largest sustainable fashion competition – on a global competition in which participants between 13 and 18 years of age were challenged to create garments using only recycled materials. The collaboration included a presentation by four teenage students wearing clothing made from “junk” to an audience of industry chief executive officers at the Brand Licensing Europe 2022 summit, held in London in September. In November, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, the Regional Information Centre facilitated a “#YouthLead Climate Takeover” discussion between the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth and the chief executive officer of Junk Kouture. The discussion was attended by 1,400 participants, including students, educators and business representatives.

74. In September, the United Nations Information Service in Vienna collaborated with the Austrian Youth Environment Platform (Jugend-Umwelt-Plattform JUMP) to organize two outdoor workshops for primary school children in Bratislava and Vienna as a follow-up to the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. The workshops offered an opportunity for children to explore the importance of protecting rivers and water ecosystems by collecting natural materials and litter from the riverbanks that were then used to create works of art. The Information Service produced a video and story about the workshops and promoted them on its social media platforms.

75. The promotion of United Nations international days provided information centres the opportunity to collaborate with multiple stakeholders to address specific concerns of Member States. In Madagascar, the information centre in Antananarivo collaborated with the resident coordinator to promote the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (13 October) in Mananjary, an area severely affected by climate change. The team organized educational activities on climate mitigation, including conferences at schools and a town hall discussion, as part of the ActNow campaign, and set up information stands across the city that received close to 10,000 visitors in a single day. Some 23 media outlets covered the International Day, including 10 radio stations, 8 television stations and 5 newspapers. The team also visited the city of Fianarantsoa, where they organized an outreach activity at a local school to raise awareness of Goal 3 on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages and Goal 6 on ensuring availability and sustainable

management of water and sanitation for all. More than 5,000 people attended the event, including high-level government officials and representatives of civil society.

76. In Nepal, to mark International Mountain Day (11 December), the information centre in Kathmandu supported the Third Pole Transboundary initiative, organized by five United Nations country offices in collaboration with the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development. The initiative aimed to build a partnership between the United Nations country offices in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan and to harmonize the work of the United Nations on climate action, disaster response and emergency preparedness. In addition, the group collaborated on advocacy work focusing on Goal 2 on zero hunger, Goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, and Goal 13 on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. The activities, which were promoted on social media, included a virtual youth summit, an art competition and a virtual panel discussion.

77. To mark Human Rights Day (10 December) and the kick-off of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which will be commemorated in 2023, information centres in Bujumbura, Burundi; Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania; Kathmandu; Lagos, Nigeria; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Vienna; and Yangon, Myanmar collaborated with various partners to organize events that ranged from briefings with students and the media to round-table discussions and art competitions.

## VII. Conclusion

78. The Department of Global Communications will continue to lead and support crisis communications responses at the country and global levels. Furthermore, its network of United Nations information centres and resident coordinator offices will be further integrated into crisis communications coordination. This will include the provision of training and updated guidance, including on reputational issues, to help to mitigate risk and enhance the overall crisis response capacity of the Department.

79. As it continues to adapt and align its work with the United Nations global communications strategy, the Department will also expand its efforts to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation. The Verified initiative will continue to provide life-saving information at national and community levels to people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to dispelling common myths about COVID-19 and encouraging people to get vaccinated, especially older adults. The Verified initiative is also expanding its scope to address misinformation and disinformation on issues such as the climate emergency and hate speech.

80. The Department will continue to drive strategic multilingual communications campaigns, including on the Sustainable Development Goals, climate action and combating hate speech, so as to foster global audience engagement on United Nations priorities and encourage stakeholders to become part of solutions. Close coordination between United Nations Headquarters and the network of United Nations information centres will be critical to the development and implementation of campaigns through targeted messaging and content adapted to national contexts and delivered in multilingual formats.

81. United Nations information centres will continue to play a central role in the implementation of communications strategies – a role that has been enhanced by their integration with the resident coordinator system. Through the coordinated work of its information centres and stronger collaboration between Headquarters and offices in the field, the Department will continue to engage and inform local and global audiences with regard to the priorities of the United Nations.