



General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 February 2021

Original: English

Committee on Information

Forty-third session

26 April–7 May 2021

Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

Consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General

Activities of the Department of Global Communications: news services

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution [75/101 B](#), provides a summary of key advances made by the Department of Global Communications from July 2020 to January 2021 in promoting the work of the United Nations to a global audience through its news services.

The news services subprogramme, one of three subprogrammes of the Department, is implemented by the News and Media Division. Its objectives are to support the United Nations through high-quality, relevant and timely information products covering the Organization's work and priorities across multimedia platforms in multiple languages and to increase the geographical range and frequency of the use of its products by media outlets and other users. The Division also manages the United Nations website and the Organization's historic audiovisual and photo libraries and provides a range of information products and services.

The activities under the other subprogrammes of the Department, namely strategic communications services and outreach and knowledge services, are described in separate reports of the Secretary-General ([A/AC.198/2021/2](#) and [A/AC.198/2021/4](#), respectively).

* [A/AC.198/2021/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [75/101 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-second session ([A/AC.198/2020/2](#), [A/AC.198/2020/3](#) and [A/AC.198/2020/4](#)) 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 news services.
3. The present report covers the services provided by the News and Media Division of the Department of Global Communications and highlights the multilingual multimedia production and ongoing reforms that have resulted in increased outreach to larger audiences in more places, including the dissemination of trustworthy and factual information on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The Department is using multiple platforms to engage with young people, communicate the priority issues of the Organization and empower people to take action through information, including by means of social media, the Internet, video, photography, print, television and radio. It has also mainstreamed the use of multilingualism with respect to the websites managed by the Department and other content it creates, whether for digital or traditional media platforms.

II. Overview

4. The Department of Global Communications produces and distributes timely, accurate and balanced news and information products for global audiences and for partners across mass media, including audio, print, television and digital platforms, in the six official languages of the United Nations, as well as in Kiswahili and Portuguese. Utilizing extrabudgetary contributions received from the Government of India, the Department added multimedia service in Hindi as a pilot programme that began in 2018. In the management and delivery of its news services and products, the Department adheres to the priorities and guidance of the Committee on Information, including by conducting regular impact assessments and evaluations, producing materials in formats that are suited to diverse audiences and developing partnerships with media organizations and other amplifiers to strengthen support for the activities of the Organization, with the greatest transparency.
5. The Department has maintained its strong commitment to multilingualism across its platforms and ensured that the use of new and emerging technologies does not overshadow that of traditional communications tools, such as radio, audio programming, television and video, in formats that support access by smaller broadcasters. The Department has also increased its efforts to communicate with younger audiences by creating innovative content and distributing it using both traditional and new media.

III. Digital

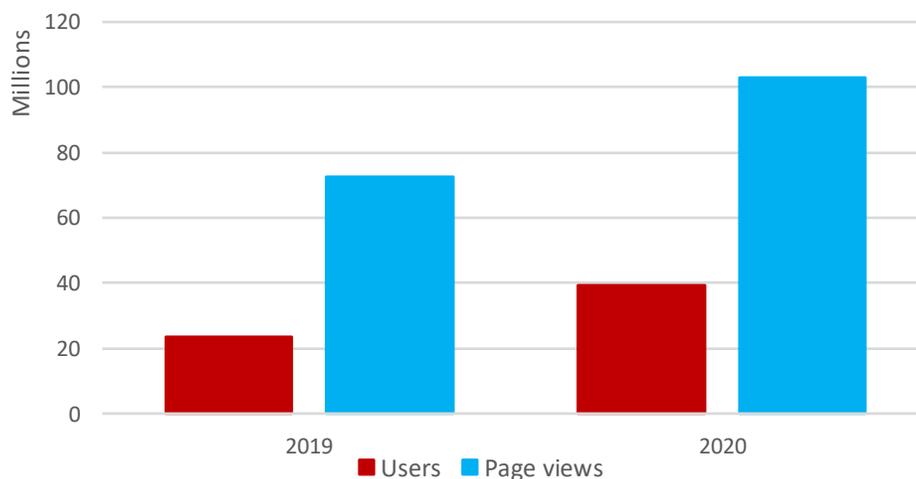
A. United Nations website

6. In 2020, the largest increase in audiences visiting the United Nations website since the Department started tracking user behaviour on its websites was registered, due in part to COVID-19 and the global need for reliable information. In addition to the number of users visiting the site (reach), audiences demonstrated deeper engagement with the content published on the site than in any previous year.

7. Between 1 July and 15 November 2020, www.un.org reached more than 39.2 million users in the six official languages combined, an increase of more than 67 per cent compared with the same period in 2019, and audience engagement with un.org also increased, with the site registering more than 102 million page views. This was an increase of more than 30 million page views compared with the corresponding period in 2019, a rise of more than 41 per cent (see figure 1).

Figure I

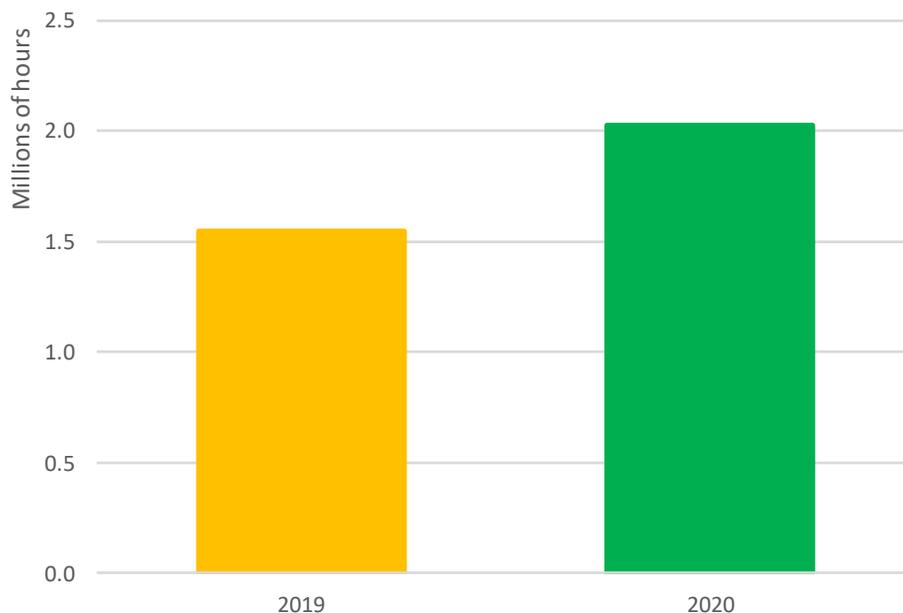
Engagement as measured by unique users and page views, 1 July–15 November



8. In addition, visitors to un.org stayed on the site longer than they did a year earlier, with total visit duration between 1 July and 15 November 2020 measuring more than 2 million hours, compared with 1.5 million hours during the same period in 2019 (see figure II).

Figure II

Engagement as measured by visit duration, 1 July–15 November



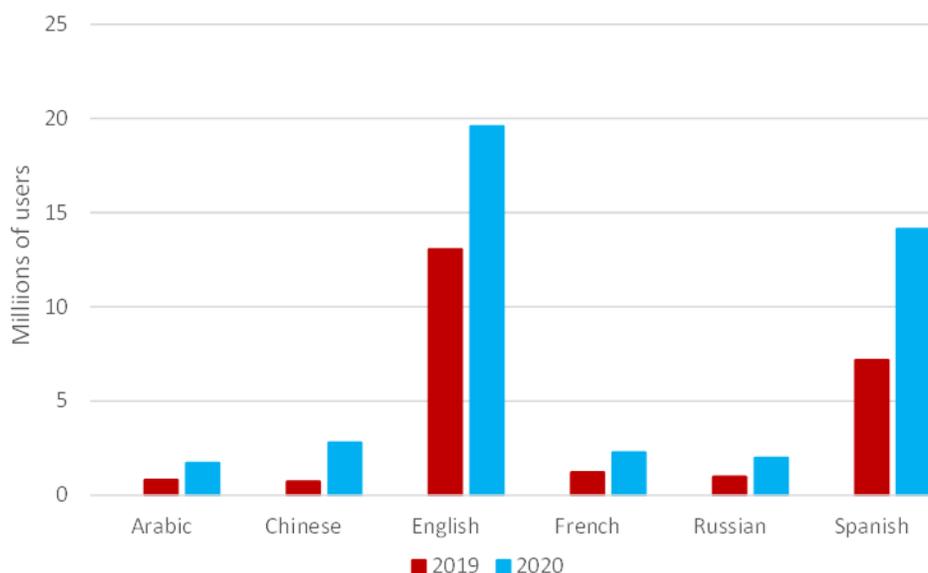
9. Three areas of the site which drew in a notably large share of the total audience between 1 July and 15 November 2020 were:

- The Sustainable Development Goals website (<https://sdgs.un.org>), which measured 45 per cent growth in reach, with 4.3 million unique users, and 35.7 per cent growth in engagement, with 13.3 million page views, up from 9.8 million during the same period in 2019
- The dedicated COVID-19 portal (www.un.org/coronavirus), launched in March 2020, which attracted over 2 million unique users and more than 3 million page views during this period
- United Nations international observance Days, which attracted 2.5 million users and 4.3 million page views during this period.

10. Combined, these three areas alone were responsible for 22.6 per cent of the total reach on un.org and 20.1 per cent of total engagement measured in page views during the period between 1 July and 15 November 2020.

11. In terms of reach and engagement by language, all the un.org websites in all six official languages measured significant gains in reach in comparison with 2019. The Arabic, Chinese and Russian sites more than doubled in reach, with the Arabic site growing by 112 per cent, the Chinese site by 283 per cent and the Russian site by 103 per cent. In terms of volume of growth in audience reach, the most notable changes were seen with regard to the English and Spanish sites, which both added more than 6 million unique users (13.5 million combined) between 1 July and 15 November 2020 (see figure III).

Figure III
Audience reach by language, 1 July-15 November



12. Growth in both page views and total visit duration was also measured for each of the six language sites between 1 July and 15 November 2020 (see figures IV and V). In proportional terms, the most notable growth was seen on the Russian site, which grew by 148 per cent, registering over 5 million more page views than during the same period in 2019. Total visit duration in Russian also saw marked growth, with the time spent on the site clocking in at 46 per cent longer than during the

corresponding period in 2019. The Spanish site saw the largest proportional increase in visit duration, with total visits 93.5 per cent longer than in the corresponding period in 2019. In terms of volume of growth in engagement, the largest increases in page views were seen on the Spanish and English sites, with Spanish registering 11.7 million more page views than during the same period in 2019 (growth of 63 per cent) and English registering 11.1 million more page views in comparison with a year earlier (growth of 27 per cent).

Figure IV
Page views by language, 1 July–15 November

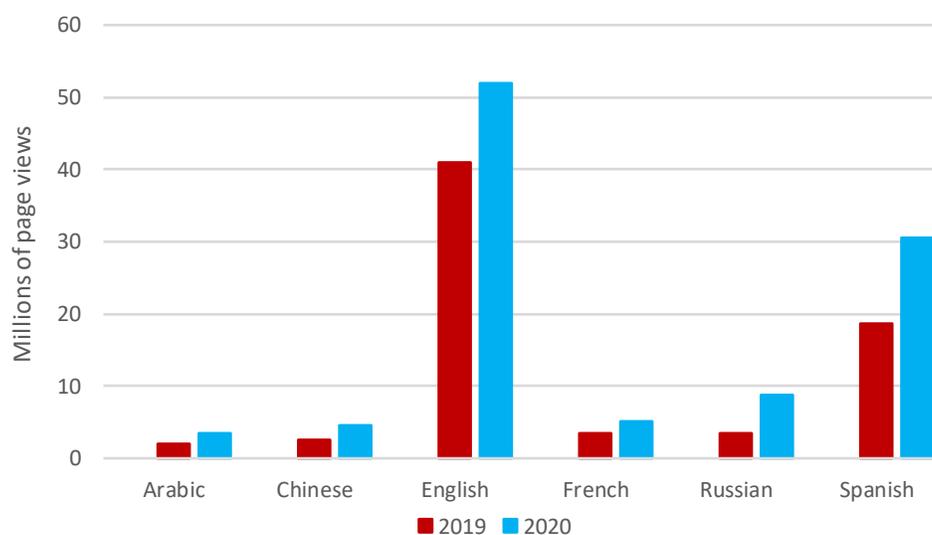
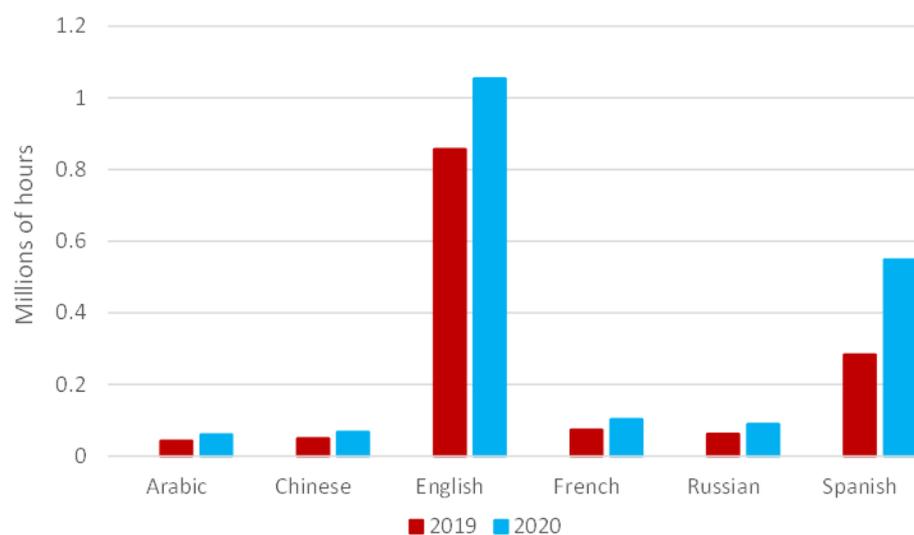


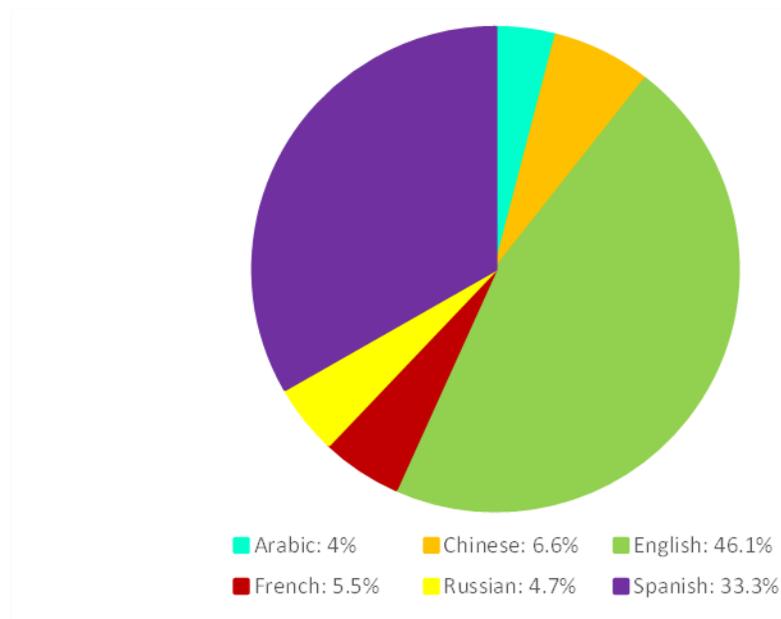
Figure V
Total visit duration by language, 1 July–15 November



13. While the [un.org](https://www.un.org) sites in English and Spanish continued to draw the largest share of the audience overall, the largest growth in audience share during the period 1 July to 15 November 2020 was seen on the Chinese site (increasing from 3 per cent in

2019 to 6.6 per cent in 2020) and Spanish (from 29.9 per cent in 2019 to 33.3 per cent in 2020). Growth in audience share was seen for un.org sites in other languages as follows: Arabic (from 3.4 per cent in 2019 to 4 per cent in 2020), French (from 5.1 per cent in 2019 to 5.5 per cent in 2020) and Russian (from 4.1 per cent in 2019 to 4.7 per cent in 2020) (see figure VI).

Figure VI
Audience share by language, 2020



14. During the reporting period, the Department utilized the centralized UN-2 web hosting system to consolidate websites previously operated in several databases into one single database. In so doing, compliance with United Nations website branding and accessibility have been improved and website content better integrated. By the end of the reporting period, all United Nations international observance websites had been migrated to the UN-2 hosting platform, bringing the total number of multilingual web properties hosted on UN-2 to around 250.

15. The UN-2 platform also gained interest from other United Nations entities. During the reporting period, the websites of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (www.un.org/en/desa) and the Department of Safety and Security (www.un.org/en/safety-and-security) were both migrated to the platform, bringing both of these entities into compliance with the latest United Nations web branding and accessibility standards.

16. New United Nations international observances established by the General Assembly during its seventy-fourth session were all covered with dedicated web pages in the six official languages of the United Nations. These new sites include ones dedicated to:

- World Chess Day, 20 July (General Assembly resolution [74/22](#)): www.un.org/en/observances/world-chess-day
- International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, 7 September (General Assembly resolution [74/212](#)): www.un.org/en/observances/clean-air-day

- International Day to Protect Education from Attack, 9 September (General Assembly resolution 74/275): www.un.org/en/observances/protect-education-day
- International Equal Pay Day, 18 September (General Assembly resolution 74/142): www.un.org/en/observances/equal-pay-day
- International Day for Universal Access to Information, 28 September (General Assembly resolution 74/5): www.un.org/en/observances/information-access-day
- International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste, 29 September (General Assembly resolution 74/209): www.un.org/en/observances/end-food-waste-day
- International Day of Banks, 4 December (General Assembly resolution 74/245): www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-banks.

17. Full support and coverage of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations continued via a dedicated website (www.un.org/un75). Of particular note was the coverage of the high-level meetings on 21 September and 26 October 2020 to commemorate the anniversary. All statements were captured, with dedicated subpages for each participating Member State, providing summaries, source materials and multimedia items such as on-demand video.

18. Website coverage of the high-level general debate of the seventy-fifth session (<https://gadebate.un.org/generaldebate75/en>) was upgraded from previous similar coverage with the provision of an improved “speaking now” function. A new online guide to the full programme of high-level events during the period (www.un.org/en/ga/news/media_advisory_HLM75.shtml) was well received, and this web page was one of the most popular pages related to the General Assembly debate.

19. A new website was launched to support the call of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire (www.un.org/globalceasefire), providing the latest campaign updates, news and features, and encouraging website visitors to sign an online appeal in support of a global ceasefire.

20. A revamped climate action website (www.un.org/en/climatechange) was launched during the reporting period. Available in all six official languages, this upgraded website includes new sections on recovering better, the science related to climate change, actions and solutions, and offers ways for the public to support the call of the United Nations for climate action. The website was accompanied by a revamped Act Now website (www.un.org/en/actnow), which offers people multiple ways to act in support of climate action.

21. A website was also launched in support of the upcoming Food Systems Summit (www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit), to be convened by the Secretary-General in late 2021.

22. The Women Rise for All campaign, which promotes the empowerment of women and girls, was supported with a dedicated section within the COVID-19 portal (www.un.org/en/coronavirus/women-rise-for-all), as was the Initiative on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond (www.un.org/en/coronavirus/financing-development) and the call to tackle COVID-19 together through the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator initiative (www.un.org/en/coronavirus/act-accelerator). In the context of COVID-19, a new web section was also launched to promote and advocate for disabilities inclusion during the pandemic (www.un.org/en/coronavirus/disability-inclusion).

23. Continuing its support for disabilities inclusion, the Department enhanced the website on the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy) with new sections providing an extensive range of resources and tools on disabilities inclusion, as well as the first set of United Nations system-wide results on strategy implementation across the Secretariat.

24. The work of the United Nations on data strategy, digital inclusion and digital financing was supported with new dedicated websites on the following topics: the Data Strategy of the Secretary General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere with Insight, Impact and Integrity (www.un.org/en/content/datastrategy/index.shtml), the Task Force on Digital Financing of the Sustainable Development Goals (www.un.org/en/digital-financing-taskforce) and the Secretary-General's Road Map for Digital Cooperation (www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap).

25. The Department's web team also supported the Organization's work on fighting sexual exploitation and abuse by developing a new section for the Victims' Rights Advocate (www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/victims-rights-advocate), as well as promoting the Organization's work in fighting for human rights with a web page dedicated to a live discussion series entitled "Beyond the long shadow: engaging with difficult histories" (www.un.org/en/engaging-with-difficult-histories).

26. The *Awake At Night* podcast, hosted by the Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications, was transferred to the Department from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in early 2020 and was developed and redesigned within un.org, and promoted on the United Nations website. Season 3 of *Awake At Night* launched on 7 July 2020, and average downloads per episode of season 3 are between 70,000 and 95,000. Between 1 July and 15 November there were 980,624 downloads of the podcast in total, the majority of which were of season 3. That amounts to over 870,000 more downloads in a four-and-a-half-month period than the total number of downloads of the podcast series prior to its transfer to the Department.

B. Social media

27. During the reporting period, the Department continued to recalibrate its social media strategy in the context of the pandemic, including by focusing on promoting and amplifying the Verified initiative, and promoting the opening of the general debate and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations on social media. Verified, a United Nations-wide effort that forms a critical component of the Secretariat's COVID-19 communications response initiative, engaged millions of social media users around the world through more than 1,000 pieces of content in more than 50 languages. Video produced for Verified was viewed online 660 million times. Social media platforms serve as a vital mechanism for reaching people worldwide with essential public health information and guidance and for combating misinformation. The Department received extensive support from the major social media platforms to address online misinformation, highlight the ongoing relevance of the United Nations in the face of global challenges and engage social media users on key issues, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

28. The total number of followers of all flagship United Nations social media accounts across platforms and languages increased by almost 2 million between 1 July and 31 October 2020 (see figure VII). This represents a growth rate that is 42 per cent greater than the rate measured during the corresponding four-month period in 2019. Twitter accounts saw particularly sustained growth, with almost 500,000 new followers gained (see figure VIII). Facebook accounts saw the largest

increase in followers during this period, with over 700,000 new followers, more than 550,000 of which joined in October alone, the largest single-month increase on this platform for the United Nations since 2017 (see figure IX). Instagram overtook Facebook as the second most followed platform, after Twitter, in March 2020 and added followers at a rate of more than 200,000 per month until August 2020, marking the longest uninterrupted period in which monthly new follower acquisitions on Instagram exceeded 200,000 every month (see figure X).

Figure VII

Growth in total social media followers, 1 July–31 October 2020

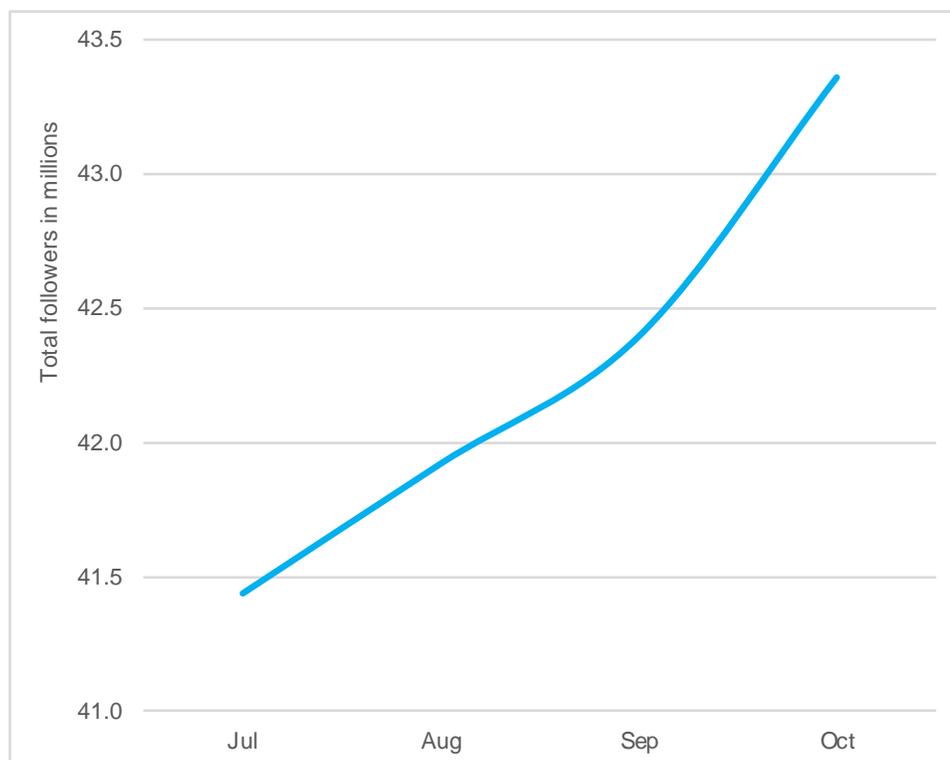


Figure VIII
Twitter followers in all languages, 1 July–31 October

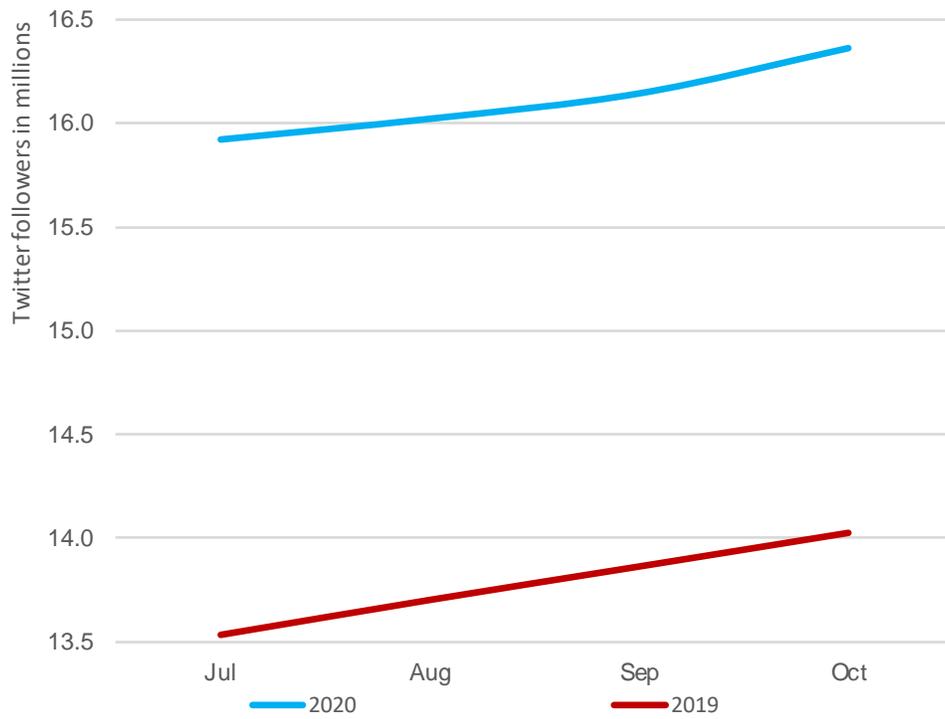


Figure IX
Facebook followers in all languages, 1 July–31 October

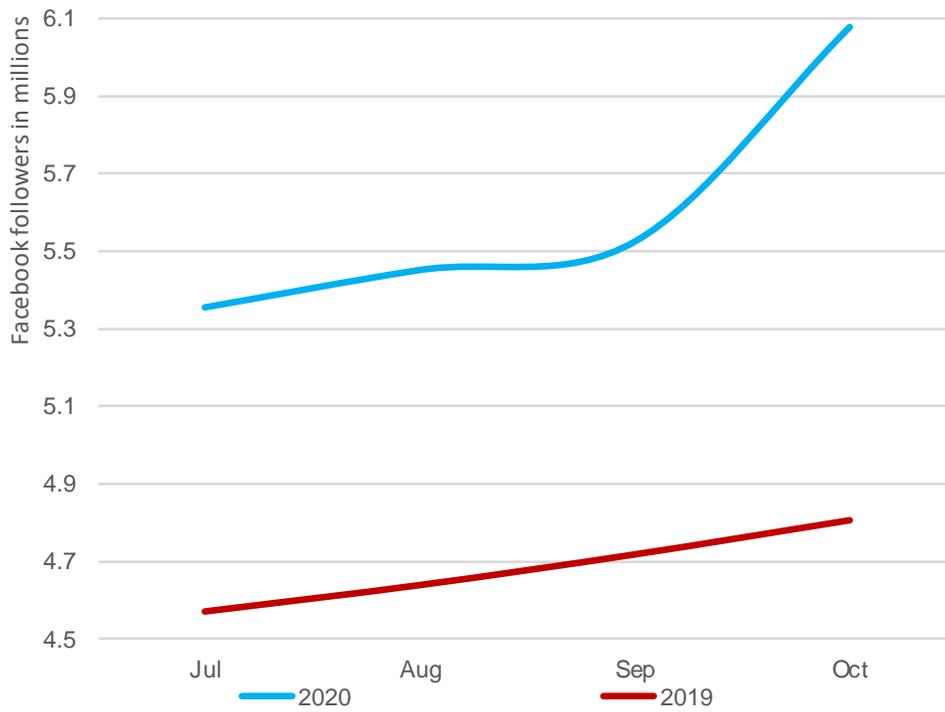
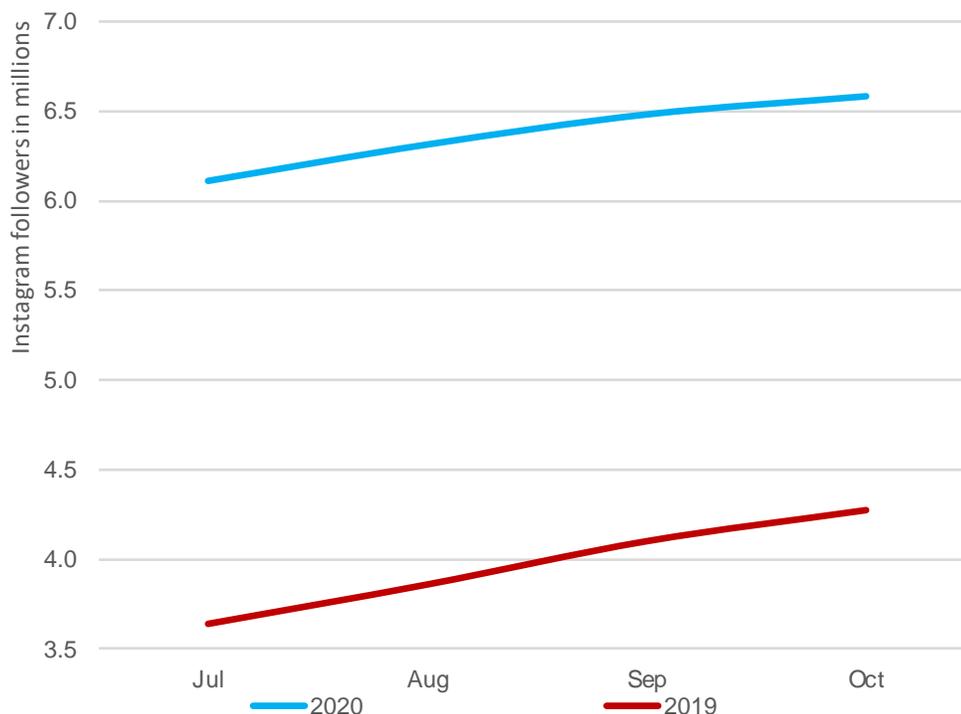


Figure X
Instagram followers in all languages, 1 July–31 October



IV. News and multimedia services

29. Faced with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, UN News moved seamlessly into remote coverage of the global work of the United Nations, ensuring that there was no disruption to the public-facing websites and providing compelling stories, as well as audio and video content, across nine languages on a range of United Nations priorities, as well as on the work of the principal United Nations bodies. Moreover, the teams transitioned into applying the principles of the newly launched United Nations Global Communications Strategy to drive its digital storytelling. The emphasis on “solutions” journalism and audience-focused content creation can be seen in the massive increase in followers and engagement during the reporting period.

A. Video and television

Video production

30. The Department’s Video Section continued to deliver news, social media and broadcast outputs using different platforms to expand its reach. While maintaining a strong presence on traditional media through its multilingual short documentary series *UN in Action*, the Video Section continued its efforts to reach a youth audience by producing short pieces for Instagram’s IGTV application.

31. *UN in Action*, produced for traditional media and also made available to digital outlets, included pieces highlighting the efforts of Member States with regard to antisemitism and zero carbon farming, as well as the work of peacekeeping missions and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to combat sexual exploitation and violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Other work featured in the *UN in Action* series included the work of the World Food

Programme (WFP) as it responded to an increasing hunger crisis, which had been made worse by the pandemic.

32. The Video Section provided many video clips that featured in the tweets of the Secretary-General. On the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Section continued to support the promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals. A video for the Women Rise For All campaign was created with clips from Heads of State and leaders as a call to action around gender equality.

33. The Section worked to combat the spread of misinformation regarding COVID-19 by creating straightforward public service announcements on handwashing and social distancing. It also produced 21 video messages and briefings of the Secretary-General during the reporting period focused on the response of the United Nations to the pandemic; most were translated into all six official languages.

34. As part of the coverage of the General Assembly, the Video Section created a series of news round-up videos during the general debate (“75th General Assembly in 75 Seconds”), which was promoted on social media platforms. The Section created video content for the Climate Ambition Summit, co-convened by the United Nations, France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, alongside their partners Chile and Italy, on 12 December 2020 to mark the fifth anniversary of the Paris Agreement, and for the One Planet Summit, co-hosted by the Secretary-General and the President of France on 11 January 2021. Interviews with the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session, as well as the Secretary-General, and a General Assembly promotional video, were shared across social media.

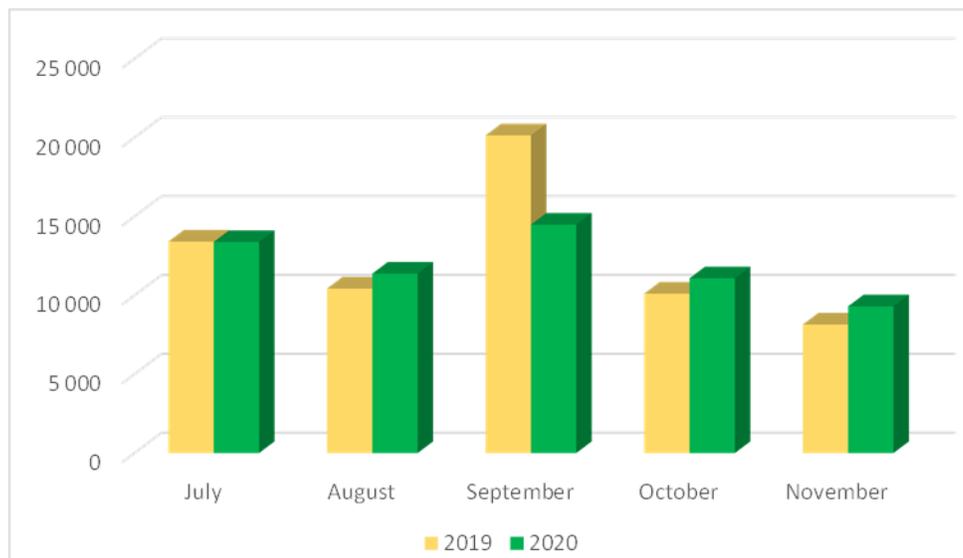
35. The Section created a short video commemorating the work of the United Nations throughout its 75-year history, set to W.H. Auden’s “Hymn to the United Nations”. The video was also turned into a 360-degree film through the Social Media Section’s close partnership with Facebook, and promoted on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

36. The Video Section promoted the work of United Nations peacekeeping troop-contributing countries via social media and broadcast channels, producing a video with Department of Peace Operations highlighting the vital role that women play in peacekeeping and regularly sending broadcasters footage from United Nations missions around the world.

UNifeed

37. UNifeed, a key source of footage for broadcasters around the world, provided timely broadcast-quality video from Headquarters in New York and peacekeeping missions, as well as from more than 30 agencies, funds and programmes. Despite technical limitations posed by the pandemic, UNifeed registered record-breaking output and global usage. UNifeed packages are projected to have been broadcast over 80,000 times by the end of the reporting period. In September alone, 14,483 broadcasts were registered, the third highest number of broadcasts by month since records have been kept (see figure XI).

Figure XI
Broadcasts of UNifeed packages, 1 July 2020–31 January 2021



Webcast

38. UN Webcast managed the Organization's global streaming media platforms: United Nations Web TV (<http://webtv.un.org>) and the United Nations channel on YouTube (www.youtube.com/unitednations). It improved and expanded its live and on-demand streaming coverage of United Nations meetings and events to other digital platforms, including Facebook and Twitter, reaching a wide and diverse global audience.

39. During the reporting period, the four combined streaming platforms generated 62 million video views.

40. With COVID-19 restrictions, Member States, the media and global audiences relied increasingly on United Nations Web TV to follow live and on-demand (recorded) virtual meetings and events. A special COVID-19 playlist with more than 300 videos, including all COVID-19 press briefings conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO), was made available to global audiences on the United Nations Web TV website.

41. The Department considers multilingualism a priority and has been actively seeking resources and exploring technological options to provide multilingual on-demand webcast videos and searchable language metadata for meetings of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. The general debate of the seventy-fifth session of the Assembly was made available live in the six official languages, along with the individual video clips and associated language metadata for each speaker. By its resolution [75/252](#), the Assembly approved resources to strengthen multilingualism in the 2021 programme budget.

United Nations channel on YouTube

42. The United Nations channel on YouTube has been expanding its subscriber base and audience, with some 910,000 subscribers as of January 2021 and a total of 125 million video views since its creation in 2006. User engagement has also been high, with thousands of comments and messages from global viewers on various topics.

Live coverage, television broadcast and facilities

43. The pandemic challenged the workflow of UNTV dramatically, as in-person events were suspended and meetings, press conferences and other events migrated to virtual platforms. UNTV adapted to these changes in close collaboration with the Office of Information and Communications Technology and other partners. It developed services and workflows tailored to virtual, hybrid and occasional in-person events while creating a safe environment for staff who needed to be on site every day.

44. The general debate of the General Assembly, a hybrid event with live introductions in the General Assembly Hall alternating with recorded speeches by Heads of State and representatives of Member States, remained of interest to UNTV clients such as international television networks and broadcasters. A total of 112,997 minutes of content was downloaded from its two fibre transmission hubs, Encompass and The Switch.

45. Video designers used the UNTV studios to provide a polished look for virtual meetings, with graphics and branding elements, leading to an increase in requests for this kind of programme. There was an increase in the number of virtual meetings due to COVID-19, including meetings requiring greater pre-production coordination, the incorporation of graphic elements and the accommodation of multiple remote web-based participants.

46. A new trend was the rising demand for live televised segments with the Secretary-General in conferences and forums organized by Member States, think tanks and the private sector. On an almost daily basis, UNTV provided connectivity testing on various platforms (from WebEx, Teams and Zoom to MiCollab, vMix and Sandbox), coordinated live links and set up studio or conference rooms with the exact background design the organizers desired for their event.

B. UN News

47. The nine language teams of UN News worked with partners to create unique multimedia stories throughout the reporting period. UN News saw 108 per cent sitewide growth from July through November 2020 (see figure XII), with a record 25.3 million page views, up from 12.2 million during the same time frame in 2019. An equally notable fact was the surge in people visiting the website, with the number of users growing from 5.6 million to 15.6 million in the same period compared with 2019, an increase of 179 per cent (see figure XIII).

Figure XII
Growth in number of UN News page views, 2020 compared with 2019

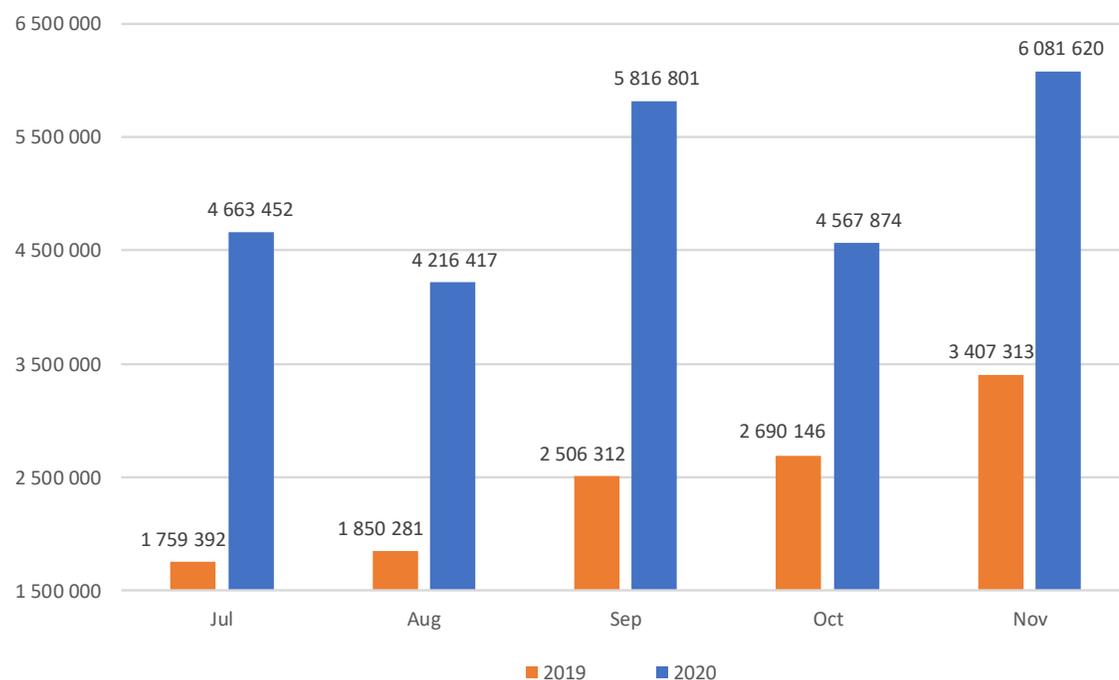
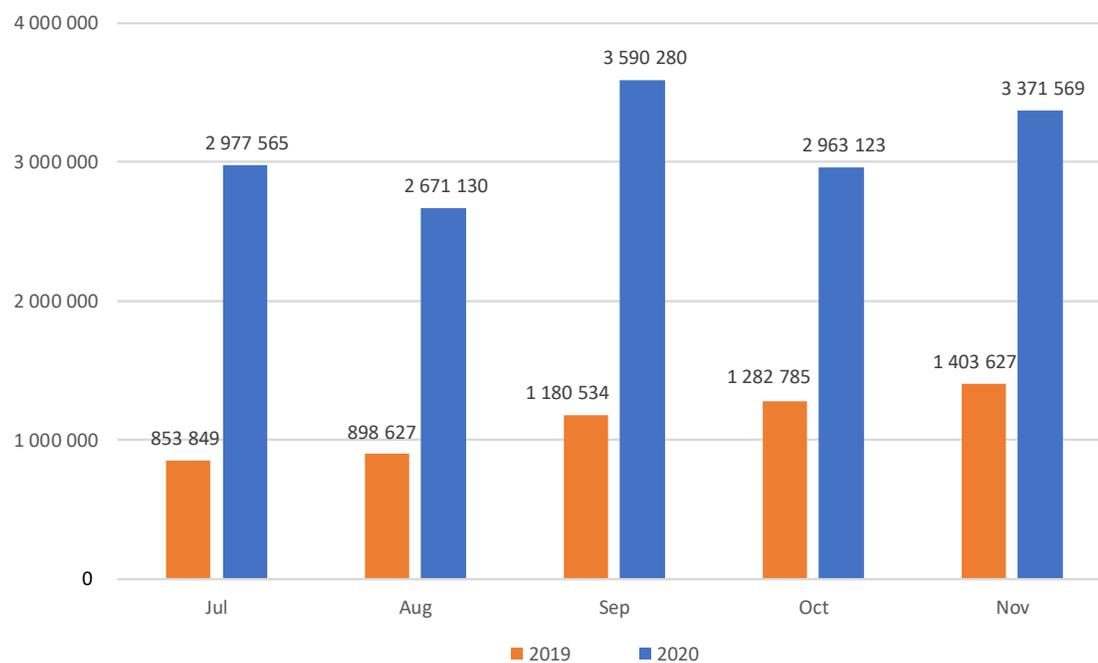


Figure XIII
Growth in number of UN News users, 2020 compared with 2019



48. Efforts to engage audiences innovatively in the virtual General Assembly session bore fruit with an increase of more than 111 per cent in the number of visitors to the website. Monthly totals for September broke records, reaching 5.8 million page views, compared with 2.5 million in 2019. UN News introduced a live blog news format, commonly used by prominent news entities, to cover major United Nations events such as UN75, the high-level General Assembly meetings on climate change and biodiversity, and World Food Day.

49. UN News focused its coronavirus-related coverage on the solutions being used by countries and communities to overcome the impact of the pandemic, the battle against misinformation, principles of solidarity and science-based recovery for all and the search for an equitable, affordable vaccine. In addition, prominence was given to the call of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire, highlighting what is required for conflict resolution and mediation.

50. UN News expanded its network of media partners in Central Asia and the Baltic States, throughout East Africa and across different language diasporas, pursued deeper collaboration with United Nations information centres, augmented synergetic cooperation with Member States on social media and increased strategic joint efforts with resident coordinator offices to give users an intimate picture of how the United Nations is working at the country level. The collaboration with the Verified campaign has resulted in content being adapted into other languages to reach different demographics to address misinformation and also amplify the daily updates of WHO.

51. UN News Arabic continued to be a key resource for those seeking authoritative information about the United Nations and the Middle East and North Africa region, including for major Arabic-language media outlets. The site's stories and videos were carried by, among others, Al Jazeera, Al-Arabiya, the Emirates News Agency and Saudi News Agency. The number of page views between 1 July and 1 November 2020 was 237 per cent greater than during the same period in 2019.

52. During the reporting period, the Arabic team launched a series of multimedia features on COVID-19 to counter misinformation and showcase response efforts being made at the national level. The Unit also continued to devote special attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women, giving voice to women in leadership positions from all over the region, using multimedia elements to show women in active and strong positions to counter stereotypes. UN News Arabic worked closely with peacemaking and peacekeeping presences in the Arab world, including by raising the profile of the mediation efforts by the Special Envoys of the Secretary-General on Libya and for Yemen, as well as the humanitarian crises gripping countries such as Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

53. Stories that drew traffic during the period included coverage of the work of the International Court of Justice and the elections held by the General Assembly to fill seats on the Human Rights Council. As at 1 November 2020, the number of followers on Twitter of UN News Arabic was 633,000, a 30 per cent increase compared with a year earlier. On Facebook, there was an increase of more than 16 per cent in the number of followers, and there was also an increase of about 29 per cent in the number of subscribers on YouTube. Illustrating the growth in engagement, the number of video plays increased by 978 per cent, from just under 50,000 in 2019 to over 538,000 in 2020.

54. UN News Chinese produced a wealth of content in line with the science-based initiatives led by WHO and highlighted success stories based on reports from United Nations agencies. The Chinese team also actively supported Verified by creating new versions of related content to reach audiences in China.

55. An interview with the Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union was aimed at debunking the dangerous theory that 5G technology spreads the coronavirus. An interview with the Resident Coordinator in Mongolia showcased efforts by that country and the United Nations to contain the virus. Working closely with the United Nations country team in China, the Chinese team produced more than 30 interviews in the field with United Nations officials, public health officials and doctors and nurses working on the front lines to combat the crisis.

56. Even as the pandemic required the United Nations to convene a virtual general debate in 2020, the Chinese team published more than 170 related stories and covered the statements of more than 30 Heads of State and Government. Compared with the 2019 high-level period, the number of followers of UN News Chinese on Weibo increased by 24 per cent, with 1.45 million registered as of early November. The number of page views grew by more than 76.5 per cent, to 2.32 million.

57. UN News English introduced several innovative products and story formats that helped to drive home key United Nations priorities during the pandemic. The “First person” and “Resident coordinator blog” products were adapted by other language teams to tell important stories regarding the positive contribution being made by United Nations staff in the field, especially in the context of COVID-19.

58. Compared with the same period in 2019, the UN News English website registered growth of 115 per cent, with a total of 3.5 million users from the beginning of July through early November. The website garnered 6.2 million page views during this period. In September 2020, site reached more than one million users, representing a 99.5 per cent increase compared with the same month in 2019. The website also registered a 69 per cent increase in page views compared to the previous year, garnering 1.8 million page views in September.

59. The English team continued to produce quality audio content, including interviews and podcasts, despite the production challenges posed by the pandemic. The site saw an increase of 169 per cent in the overall number of audio plays compared with the previous reporting period, including a total of 1.3 million audio interactions from the beginning of July through early November. Through strengthened or new partnerships with major platform providers, including Spotify, SoundCloud and Apple Podcasts, efforts improved to distribute audio material, including through a redesigned audio hub on the UN News site.

60. In monthly episodes of the programme “The lid is on”, topics included disaster risk reduction in Lebanon following the deadly Beirut port blast; digital technology and racism, including a discussion with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the World Food Programme. The top audio interview was with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Representative in Pakistan on how the United Nations agency is supporting women in rural areas, despite the corrosive impact of the pandemic.

61. COVID-19, climate change, the call for a global ceasefire and youth were among the top themes covered by UN News French. Among the five most popular articles during the reporting period, four were related to the pandemic, while the other was on the call of the Secretary-General for a ceasefire. The French team produced a monthly podcast, in which attention was paid to the Sustainable Development Goals and gender, among other topics. African issues featured prominently among the topics most popular on UN News French; the creation of content tailored to these news consumers is an example of an increasingly audience-focused approach. Special attention was given to the situation in francophone countries, including peace and security issues in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo

and Mali, where the United Nations maintains peacekeeping operations, and the situation in Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, three countries affected by various degrees of instability.

62. During the high-level period of the General Assembly, the French team produced 41 video clips, including of the Secretary-General and of all French-speaking government representatives who addressed the virtual general debate. The video clip of the speech of the Secretary-General to the Assembly was particularly successful, with 7,483 views on YouTube. UN News French stories received 1.2 million page views during the reporting period, a 105 per cent increase compared with the same reporting period in 2019 (587,000 page views).

63. Audiences responded positively when stories on those important topics were shared by influencers on social media, including key French Government officials, the Department of State of the United States of America via its French-language Twitter account, parliamentarians from Canada, France and Belgium, media outlets (RFI, Voice of America French, France Culture), entertainment figures, civil society, corporations and educational and cultural institutions.

64. UN News Hindi has seen its brand grow among audiences, with an increase in page views of 110 per cent during the reporting period compared with the same period in 2019.

65. Videos produced by UN News Hindi to raise awareness about COVID-19, as well as to combat misinformation, were widely shared by media outlets in India, including BBC Hindi. The Hindi team also acquired new radio partners in Canada, South Africa, Sweden and the United States.

66. UN News Kiswahili continued to find innovative ways to engage audiences across East Africa, using platforms and content that are in use in those countries. Several new partnerships were established, such as with Hooza in Rwanda, which rebroadcasts the audio and video programmes of UN News Kiswahili and makes them available through its mobile app. During the reporting period, UN News Kiswahili added 10 partners from Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, covering FM radio stations, blogs and online TV programmes. Strengthened cooperation with United Nations information centres, the Economic Commission for Africa and United Nations agencies across the region has enabled targeted content. This means incorporating more materials from the field, especially those containing the voices of beneficiaries of United Nations help and support on the ground. For example, in Kigoma, United Republic of Tanzania, farmers receive technical support and products, including cash and equipment from FAO and WFP to improve their productivity and their economic situation, which helps to fulfil the United Nations priority of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.

67. In 2020, subscriptions to the UN News Kiswahili YouTube channel rose by 115 per cent. Impressions reached 14.6 million, an increase of more than 92 per cent from 7.6 million in 2019. During the reporting period, the number of page views for UN News Kiswahili rose by 114 per cent to over 1.8 million.

68. UN News Kiswahili incorporated many grass-roots voices in its content by boosting cooperation with news partners and United Nations agencies, as well as United Nations information centres. A key ingredient of the audience-focused programming is spotlighting the voices of United Nations beneficiaries on the ground, including in peacekeeping missions. This strategy strengthened audience engagement and the availability of Kiswahili content to beneficiaries in East Africa, given that UN News Kiswahili produces the only daily multimedia output from the United Nations in Kiswahili. In recognition of its impact and reach, the Kiswahili Unit won the 2020–2021 Tanzania Kiswahili Media Global Award of the Tanzania National

Kiswahili Council (Baraza la Kiswahili la Taifa, or BAKITA) for “amplifying and expanding Kiswahili Language vocabularies in the global arena”. BAKITA is the Tanzanian institution responsible for regulating and promoting the Kiswahili language inside and outside the country.

69. During the reporting period, UN News Portuguese saw an increase of 151 per cent in the number of users and 121 per cent in page views compared with the same period in 2019. The team has continued with its evaluation of the content, quality and impact of its operations across the globe based on feedback from users and partners.

70. UN News Portuguese has secured additional partnerships, the latest being CNN Brazil, which broadcasts to 60 million people in Brazil and in other lusophone countries. The cooperation was launched with an interview by the Secretary-General on the COVID-19 pandemic and the work of the United Nations on the eve of the general debate of the General Assembly. Exceptional collaboration with WHO and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) enabled the team to keep users of the website informed during the coronavirus pandemic with a range of stories and interviews. The team produced multimedia “explainers” featuring WHO and PAHO officials.

71. During the reporting period, the most searched topics on the UN News Portuguese site were climate change, COVID-19, peace and security, Africa, the rights of women and human rights. A story on La Niña forecasts was viewed over 120,000 times, and another related to COVID-19 and indigenous issues received more than 100,000 page views. Meanwhile, a story on immunizations and the impact of fighting malaria was the most popular post on the UN News Portuguese SoundCloud account. On the YouTube channel, the most popular items were the call of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire, followed by an interview with a United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon commander after the Beirut explosion, and the speech by the President of Angola, João Lourenço, during the general debate.

72. UN News Russian tells the United Nations story in a complex media market using various formats to reach diverse audiences and balancing the coverage of global issues with local and regional angles. The audience of UN News Russian grew by more than 100 per cent during the 2020 general debate. In its COVID-19 coverage, the Russian team focused on the regional aspects of the pandemic, including by providing practical guidance on issues like personal protection measures, physical and psychological health during quarantine, protecting children from cybercrime and dealing with misinformation. Among other popular issues were the call of the Secretary-General for a global ceasefire, the rights of women and the environment.

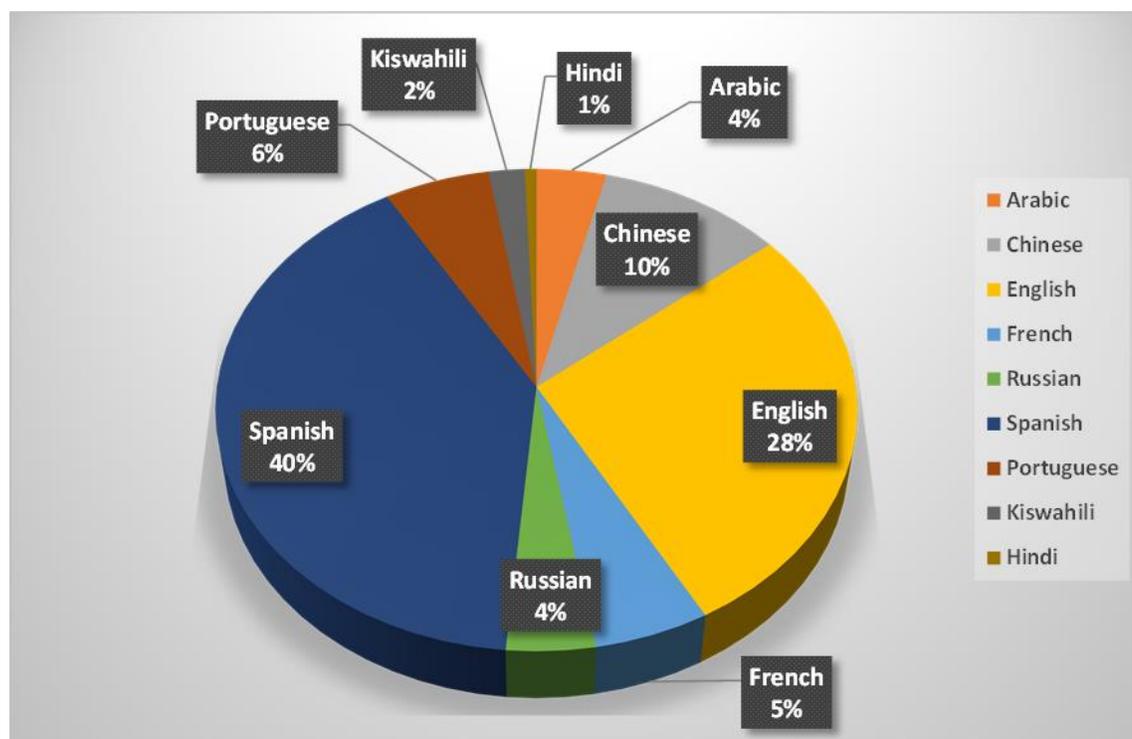
73. Increased emphasis on targeted content yielded results. Between July and November 2020, compared with the same period (July to November) in 2019, the number of page views almost tripled compared with the same period in 2019, while the number of users more than tripled. Behind these numbers are some of the biggest news agencies in the region, with millions of users, including Central Asia News, Kazinform, Informburo.kz, Azertac, BelTA and Interfax, which serve as amplifiers of UN News Russian content. The audience grew geographically as well. In addition to news outlets in Belarus, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Central Asian countries, outlets in the Baltic States now also pick up some of the stories.

74. Among the most popular posts on the UN News Russian Facebook site was a story on the Resident Coordinator in Belarus responding to protests in that country, which was viewed 10,700 times, and another on women politicians successfully fighting COVID-19, which reached 8,000 people. On Twitter, a post extolling the benefits of wearing masks in curbing the COVID-19 pandemic reached some 170,000 people.

75. During the reporting period, UN News Spanish strengthened the message of the United Nations throughout the Spanish-speaking world by increasing its page views by more than 210 per cent (from 2.84 million to 8.9 million) compared with the same period in 2019. The number of users also jumped from 1.4 to 6.07 million in the same time frame. The growth in content of UN News Spanish has led to it increasing its share of page views among the nine UN News languages to 40 per cent (see figure 14).

Figure XIV

UN News page views by language, 1 July–15 November 2020



76. UN News Spanish served as an authoritative source of information on COVID-19 thanks to numerous explainers, interviews and thorough coverage of all WHO and PAHO-WHO press conferences. In addition to COVID-19, issues such as climate change and human rights were widely viewed on the UN News Spanish website due to its high position in Google search rankings. The team worked closely with United Nations information centres and other United Nations offices in the region, jointly producing features and interviews, and carrying out coverage of virtual and in-person visits of senior officials.

77. The number of UN News Spanish followers grew over 30 per cent on Facebook from 1 July 2020 through early November compared with the same period a year earlier, reaching 250,000. On Twitter, followers almost doubled to 322,000. UN News Spanish tweets were embedded in many news websites from all over Latin America and Spain and heavily used by El País. Among major influencers, UN News Spanish content triggered retweets by national leaders across Latin America.

V. Other services

A. Photo and audiovisual archives

Digitization and the United Nations Audiovisual Library

78. The Department continued digitizing the United Nations historic audiovisual collection, made possible through a donation by the Government of Oman. To date, 32,500 audio, video and film items (approximately 55 per cent of the target) have been digitized and 14,000 metadata records have been entered into the digital database system. Among the processed archival materials, 6,000 items have been selectively posted on the Audiovisual Library website. The legacy audio disc portion of the digitization project has rescued over 15,000 audio discs from destruction. As of October 2020, a specialized technician using equipment at United Nations Headquarters had digitized over 1,000 legacy discs at low cost and high value to the Organization.

79. Once digitized, the collection will require continuous extrabudgetary funding for long-term sustainability and migration to future digital formats and standards, as well as quality assurance and long-term preservation processes.

Photos and the Photo Library

80. In November, United Nations Photo successfully launched its new digital asset management system, powered by Orange Logic's Cortex system, after a year of customization and the migration of archived photos to the new system. The United Nations Photo digital asset management system is scalable, flexible and accessible worldwide via web browser and from mobile devices. The public site can be accessed at <https://dam.media.un.org>.

81. United Nations photographers, as essential personnel, covered both virtual and in-person meetings of the General Assembly and the Security Council. However, some of the coverage was limited to respect COVID-19 protocols.

82. The Photo Library responded to more than 2,500 requests from Member States, the media, publishers, the general public and the United Nations system and distributed 69,000 high-resolution photographs.

83. United Nations Photo's Instagram account increased its followers by 110 per cent in the nine-month period after COVID-19 measures were introduced. Its Twitter following also continued to grow, showcasing the work of the Organization, past and present, to new audiences. Its Flickr account had 61 million accumulated views, with an average monthly increase of 500,000. The platform makes it easy to find and share curated content and to enjoy the breadth of photos that are taken by photographers at United Nations Headquarters and around the world.

B. Meetings coverage

84. To maintain its mandated coverage of plenaries of United Nations bodies during the pandemic, staff in the Meetings Coverage Section were required to work remotely.

85. Despite the technical constraints, Press Officers produced high-quality and accurate summaries and press releases, thanks to innovative solutions developed by the team. During the reporting period, the Meetings Coverage Section published 1,867 press releases, representing a total of 9,132 pages.

86. The Section's new working methods included working in close collaboration with the relevant Secretariat meetings services and following the meetings via United Nations Web TV, retaining the focus on same-day publishing.

87. The English-language site had more than 2.25 million users, with the largest audience share coming from the Americas. The French-language site had more than 520,000 users and 895,000 page views. Its largest audience share came from Africa. There was a notable increase in the audience in China for both English and French websites.

C. Media services: media accreditation and liaison

88. During the reporting period, the Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit could facilitate only limited media access to the United Nations due to COVID-19 mitigation measures. The Unit informed the press of resources available from the Department to assist them in their coverage of United Nations activities. The Unit is also progressing with the implementation of a new accreditation system for the media at United Nations Headquarters.

D. Partnerships

89. The Department expanded partnerships with both traditional and non-traditional media partners, as well as those outside the media industry. New traditional media partners include the Times Group of India, along with other Hindi- and English-language outlets in India, and the United States-based Weather Group, whose cable outlet, the Weather Channel, will broadcast selected United Nations-produced media content nationally. New partners outside the traditional media sector include the World Hindi Secretariat, which engages a global audience through promotional activities related to the Hindi language, and KVH Media Group International, which distributes multilingual content to nearly 1,000 merchant ships worldwide for viewing and listening by merchant naval crews. This expands on the Department's ongoing work with content service providers in the commercial aviation sector.

90. The Department established a new partnership with the global audio streaming platform Spotify, which now redistributes podcasts produced by UN News and includes the audio from the messages of the Secretary-General related to COVID-19 in a section dedicated to information on the pandemic.

91. Taking advantage of a new opportunity, the Department placed pro bono advertisements in an online business news magazine, *Quartz*, for 14 weeks. At various times, the advertisements promoted the United Nations coronavirus page, the United Nations podcast *Awake at Night* and the website dedicated to the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly during the general debate. The advertisements resulted in 15,818,423 combined views of those three websites.

VI. Conclusion

92. During the reporting period, the News and Media Division experienced unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

93. Despite difficulties, working methods were rapidly and creatively adjusted to respond to operational and audience needs, and the Department fulfilled its mandates by finding ways to ensure business continuity and producing even more engaging content to inform global audiences. Audience views and engagement across all platforms grew exponentially, a testament to the quality of the work and to the trust that media partners and the global public have in the Department's products and services.