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Questions relating to information

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 58/101 B of 9 December 2003, reflects the activities of the Department of Public Information carried out from July 2003 to June 2004, and provides information on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the resolution.

As a result of the implementation of the Secretary-General's 2002 reform proposals, the Department carried out its work during the above-mentioned period guided by a new mission statement and with a new operating model and organizational structure. The activities of the Department are now organized within its four subprogrammes: strategic communications services; news services; library services; and outreach services. The report highlights the main activities undertaken by each of the subprogrammes and includes an overview of the continuing efforts of the Department to promote and refine a culture of evaluation and performance management.

The report concludes that, after a period of transition, the reformed and restructured Department now understands what is expected of it, is mastering the means to deliver on those expectations and has gained practical experience in their execution. It is ready to apply the lessons learned, as well as its new-found confidence, to further improve the products and services it offers. By reaffirming their support for the new direction the Department has taken, Member States can play a key role in bringing their United Nations closer to people around the world.

* A/59/150.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 58/101 B of 9 December 2003, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session, and to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session, on the activities of the Department of Public Information, and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in that resolution. Accordingly, the Department of Public Information introduced five reports and a note by the Secretary-General for consideration by the Committee on Information at its twenty-sixth session, held from 26 April to 7 May 2004 (A/AC.198/2004/2-7). The deliberations of the Committee on these reports are reflected in its report to the General Assembly.¹

2. The present report, which covers the period from July 2003 to June 2004, is prepared in response to the above-mentioned resolution and updates the information already provided.

II. Overview

3. As a result of the implementation of the reform proposals of the Secretary-General made in September 2002, contained in his report entitled “Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change” (A/57/387 and Corr.1), a comprehensive restructuring of the Department of Public Information has taken place. In continuing the reorientation, the focus of the Department has been defined by its new mission statement which is to help fulfil the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact. As part of its restructuring, the Department has a new operating model and a new organizational structure. The organizational structure, which is aligned with the Department’s subprogrammes, comprises strategic communications services, news services, library services and outreach services. The details of these changes were provided in the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information (A/AC.198/2003/2).

4. Working within ever-dwindling resources, the Department has sought to maximize its efforts by making better use of the new information and communications technologies, especially the Internet. At the same time, the use of traditional means of communications, including radio, has been widened to address the needs of targeted audiences. Added emphasis has also been placed on greater coordination of communications activities between the Department of Public Information and the organizations of the United Nations family through the United Nations Communications Group. An integral part of these efforts has been the continuing promotion and refinement of a culture of evaluation and performance management.

III. Strategic communications services

A. Thematic communications campaigns

Economic and social development issues

5. Building international support for the most vulnerable countries remains a priority for the Department. During the period under review, the situation of the least developed countries was publicized by promoting the reports and discussions for the high-level segment of the 2004 session of the Economic and Social Council, held from 28 to 30 June 2004, which focused on this theme. The challenges faced by landlocked developing countries have been placed on the world's radar screen through the promotion of the Almaty Ministerial Conference, held on 28 to 29 August 2003, and of the signing of the Asian Highway Agreement in April 2004. To give renewed visibility to the vulnerabilities of small island developing States, the Department has been working on a promotional campaign leading up to the Mauritius International Meeting, now scheduled for January 2005. The Department also carried out a wide range of promotional activities in support of the International Year of Freshwater 2003. Media coverage of progress on the water target of the Millennium Development Goals appeared on a wide range of wire services reaching different regions, as well as in major outlets, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) News (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), *Aftenposten* (Norway), *The Star* (Malaysia), the *Independent Online* (South Africa) and *Jornal do Commercio do Rio de Janeiro* (Brazil).

6. Building on its extensive experience in organizing campaigns for major summits and issues, the Department is now strategizing, with the Millennium Campaign Office, a system-wide effort to promote and boost implementation of the Goals, leading up to the General Assembly high-level event in September 2005. This is a major priority for the Department. Current work is focused on agreeing on a common visual identity and slogan that all United Nations system partners can use or adapt in their promotional work.

World Summit on the Information Society

7. Following the successful promotion of the Geneva phase of the Summit, held from 10 to 12 December 2003, the Department has started preparations to publicize its second phase, to be held in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005. The United Nations information centre in Tunis covered the first preparatory meeting in Hammamet, Tunisia, from 24 to 26 June 2004, ensuring close contacts with the Tunisian media. The Department also worked closely with the United Nations Information and Communication Technology Task Force to publicize the first Global Forum on Internet Governance, held at United Nations Headquarters, on 25 and 26 March 2004, as an input to the World Summit on the Information Society process. The Forum generated at least 83 articles in English, French and Spanish, and was covered, among others, by *Mercury News*, *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, *Miami Herald* and *Chicago Tribune*, EFE, Inter Press Service and Voice of America.

HIV/AIDS

8. The Department has become a major partner in coordinating the Global Media AIDS Initiative, which was launched in January 2004, when the Secretary-General

met with more than 20 heads of global media companies. The media leaders made a commitment to increase programming on AIDS issues. Working with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Department is facilitating several joint projects, including a feasibility study for the establishment of a copyright-free database and a “creative summit”, to assist broadcasters in sharing knowledge and resources in the fight against AIDS. In addition, at the 2005 International Television Programme Market (MIP TV) in Cannes, there will be a special United Nations Day, on 12 April, to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations. The substantive focus will be on AIDS, as part of the Global Media AIDS Initiative.

Migration

9. Building on the successful experience with the 2003 World AIDS Day “media blitz”, a new model for short-term, concentrated campaigns, the Department organized a similar mini-campaign on migration issues to promote a major policy statement by the Secretary-General to the European Parliament on 29 January 2004. It placed his related op-ed in one major newspaper in each European Union country, including *Corriere della Sera* (Italy), *Frankfurter Allgemeine* (Germany), and *I Kathimerini* (Greece). Through the combined efforts of several information officers at Headquarters and United Nations information centres, the op-ed ran in 43 countries in 66 different newspapers. The Secretary-General’s statement was covered in some 52 outlets in 23 countries.

Needs of the African continent

10. A major focus of the Department’s news-gathering and reporting activities continues to be the situation in Africa and its needs, including peacekeeping and conflict resolution. The Africa Section works fulltime in support of the United Nations global information campaign to promote the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). The Department created opportunities for both the Economic Commission for Africa and the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to address the media and to raise the profile of their work internationally. On the first anniversary of the adoption of NEPAD by the General Assembly, the Department publicized the General Assembly’s review of progress made to implement the Partnership and the contribution made by the Office of the Special Adviser. In June 2004, the Department produced a television programme on HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, featuring the Special Adviser on Africa, for broadcast in Nigeria with the assistance of Nigeria’s representative on the Global Media AIDS Initiative.

11. Reflecting the goals and spirit of NEPAD, in June 2004, the Department’s magazines *Africa Recovery* and *Afrique relance* — major sources of information on Africa’s economic development — were renamed *Africa Renewal* and *Afrique renouveau*, respectively. Since December 1999, the Department has been placing shorter versions of key articles prepared for the magazine in major African media. Three or four major articles written for *Africa Renewal* are regularly published by several newspapers and magazines, including South Africa’s *Business Day*, in advance of their appearance in the United Nations magazine.

Human rights

12. During the past year, the Department continued to initiate and coordinate multimedia activities on the subject of human rights. To assist the network of United Nations information centres in their work to promote the tenth anniversary of the Rwanda genocide (7 April 2004), it provided detailed questions and answers on the main issues, a chronology of events and a short list of relevant quotes from the Secretary-General. A special media outreach campaign targeting the African media was undertaken in the days leading up to 7 April and a press packet was sent electronically to more than 100 African journalists and media organizations. Ceremonies and observances were organized by 36 United Nations information centres and services and by the Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels. The information centres in Dar es Salaam and Tokyo organized photo and poster exhibits. The Department also produced a press kit in English and French to publicize the work of the sixtieth session of the Commission on Human Rights, held from 15 March to 23 April 2004.

Decolonization

13. The Department's activities in the area of decolonization were marked by increased interdepartmental collaboration and the production of targeted information materials. An information officer from the United Nations information centre in Sydney covered the Pacific Regional Seminar on Decolonization, which was held in Madang, Papua New Guinea, in June 2004. A brochure entitled "Questions and answers on the United Nations and decolonization", issued in English, French and Spanish, informed the populations of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of the options available to them in exercising their right to self-determination.

Question of Palestine

14. The question of Palestine continued to remain a focus for the Department. The twelfth International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East was held in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, in Beijing, on 16 and 17 June 2004. It highlighted the role of civil society in promoting peace and justice in the Middle East, facilitated the dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians and provided nearly 100 journalists, diplomats and academics with an opportunity to broaden their views and perspectives on the issue. The annual training programme for Palestinian media practitioners, an initiative of the Department, now in its ninth year, continues to be a useful tool to improve the capacity of promising young Palestinian media professionals. Five Palestinian journalists participated in the 2003 training programme and 10 are due to participate in the 2004 programme, which will be held at United Nations Headquarters from 25 October to 12 December 2004.

United Nations Communications Group

15. The Department continued to strengthen system-wide coordination in the field of communications and public information through the United Nations Communications Group. The Group's third annual meeting, held at the United Nations Office at Nairobi on 24 and 25 June 2004, was attended by 36 member organizations and observer bodies. New collaborative projects agreed upon at the meeting included the standardization of guidelines for the accreditation of media representatives to United Nations meetings and special events and of the distribution

and use of United Nations photo material, and developing a common visual identity for the Millennium Development Goals Campaign. The Group's secretariat has also been asked to develop and administer an Internet-based United Nations system-wide calendar of media events. The calendar, which is scheduled to become operational by 1 October 2004, will unify all existing calendars of events and thus help to eliminate duplication and/or overlap of activities at Headquarters and in locations around the world.

B. Department of Public Information and United Nations peacekeeping

16. Guided by the priorities of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, a major client department, the Department of Public Information has emphasized peacekeeping in Africa and the dramatic surge in demands for United Nations peacekeeping operations worldwide over the past year. This included conducting assessment missions to plan for the public information aspects of United Nations operations in Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti and Liberia, and composing budgets, staffing tables and operational concepts for the information components of missions in those countries, as well as in Burundi, Iraq and the Sudan. To help individual peacekeeping operations to communicate quickly and effectively with a wide range of audiences, a week-long training programme was organized in June 2004 with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in Brindisi, Italy, for 25 public information officers. The programme focused on how to deploy full public information components during a mission's initial phase.

17. Using the occasion of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers (29 May), the Department inspired and supported activities around the world initiated by United Nations information centres and peacekeeping operations. For example, the centre in Islamabad organized a media workshop with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on United Nations peacekeeping, to which Pakistan is the major troop contributor. The United Nations Information Service in Vienna held a forum on "Challenges to United Nations peacekeeping: growing demand; decreasing resources". Several information centres placed specially prepared articles in major newspapers, including *Bangkok Post*, *An-Nahar* (Beirut), *Journal de Noti* (Lisbon), *Novye Izvestia* (Moscow) and *El Financiero* (Mexico City). The Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels held a round table on "Peacekeeping in restoring democracy". The BBC, in collaboration with the Department of Public Information, produced a series of web pages and radio reports on African peacekeeping. The Department's new brochure on peacekeeping, entitled "Meeting new challenges" was translated into the six official languages and posted on the United Nations web site.

18. The Department has placed special emphasis on promoting the Organization's work in countering terrorism. It has convened an interdepartmental/inter-agency group to prepare a system-wide communications strategy to coordinate with and complement the revitalized Counter-Terrorism Committee. In the field of disarmament, the Department has continued to work closely with the Department for Disarmament Affairs to promote disarmament-related issues on the United Nations agenda.

19. The Department continued to explain and promote the United Nations political and humanitarian roles in Iraq, as well as the actions of the Security Council preceding and following the war. The Department also had a central role in coordinating the Organization's public response to charges relating to the Oil-for-Food Programme. It prepared and disseminated information on the Programme, placed over two dozen responses to misinformation in the media and arranged interviews and background briefings for media and staff of key Member States.

C. United Nations information centres

20. In line with the Secretary-General's reform plans, the Department took the first step to rationalize the network of information centres by closing nine offices in Western Europe and establishing the Regional United Nations Information Centre in Brussels on 1 January 2004. This involved negotiations with the host Government with regard to premises and support for the Centre, logistics in connection with the office closures, the transfer or separation of staff and the recruitment of staff for the regional centre, a process that is now almost complete. The Centre moved from temporary premises to permanent office space in July 2004. The legacies of the nine centres, including contact lists, web sites, local language material and other tools were successfully transferred to the new regional centre, enabling it to continue to serve its audiences in Western Europe.

21. In his report to the Committee on Information on rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres (A/AC.198/2004/3), the Secretary-General outlined his proposals to extend the rationalization process to other regions. In line with the recommendations adopted by the Committee on 7 May 2004,¹ those proposals will be further refined in consultation with the Member States concerned.

22. The significant reduction in operational funds, as a result of the US\$ 2 million cut in the budget for the current biennium, has severely limited the ability of United Nations information centres to maintain the level of outreach to the audiences in the countries served, as available resources were largely used to cover fixed expenses, such as rent, maintenance of premises and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) cost recovery. Given the lack of funding to support their core functions, centres have often been unable to sustain regular activities, such as the production of newsletters and other publications, travel to participate in activities outside the location of the office and other activities requiring the expenditure of funds.

23. The centres have continued to strengthen their partnerships with the United Nations country teams, making their expertise available when needed. During the period under review, centres have reported 170 instances of providing support to the country launches of major United Nations reports. In addition, information centre staff chair or co-chair more than 70 per cent of the theme groups on public information established by country teams.

24. In order to further strengthen its partnership with UNDP at the country level, the Department of Public Information and UNDP consult regularly at Headquarters. Resident coordinators are also briefed by the Department when they visit Headquarters. The Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information and the Administrator of UNDP have discussed joint cooperation in the light of the rationalization process of the network of United Nations information

centres. The Department has also resumed its participation in the inter-agency Working Group on Common Premises and Services, in order to play an active role in decisions taken in the field, including those relating to security and access to centre premises.

25. Recognizing the role of the media as effective redissemulators of information to a wide audience, United Nations information centres continue to work intensively to brief media representatives and involve them in a dialogue on priority United Nations issues by organizing, for example, press conferences, briefings, interviews, as well as tours for and training of journalists.

26. In response to the Secretary-General's recommendation to strengthen the Organization's information outreach in the Arab world, the Department organized its first three-day workshop for the Middle East and Arab region in New York in September 2003, bringing together staff from 13 United Nations information centres. Representatives from the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, as well as from United Nations missions in the region, also attended the workshop. Participants formulated a strategic communications framework that was further developed into an action plan at a follow-up meeting co-organized with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and held in Beirut in May 2004. Both meetings received substantial financial support from extrabudgetary sources.

IV. News services

A. Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General

27. The Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General conducts the daily noon briefing and keeps the press, delegations and the public informed, not only of the work of the Secretary-General, but also of developments throughout the United Nations system. The Organization's official position on matters in the news is conveyed by the Spokesman's Office through the daily briefings, official statements, interviews and background briefings. The Office announces and issues the Secretary-General's official statements and makes public, via the United Nations web site, the transcripts of all his remarks to the press and his daily appointments at United Nations Headquarters. When the Secretary-General travels, the Spokesman is responsible for the media aspects of the trip and writes the official public accounts of his travels. The highlights of the daily briefing are also posted and now archived on the web site in an easy-to-read bullet point format. The information from the noon briefing provides the basis for the items posted on the United Nations News Service web site, as well as for other outlets of the Department of Public Information.

28. During the reporting period (July 2003 to June 2004), the Spokesman held 246 press briefings and organized 19 press conferences given by the Secretary-General, 78 press briefings by Member States, 139 press conferences by senior officials and five background briefings. In addition, the Office coordinated 123 press encounters and 53 press interviews with the Secretary-General.

B. Traditional means of communications: radio, television and photo

29. The live radio project on the development of an international broadcasting capacity for the United Nations is now firmly established as one of the important traditional channels for strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to large audiences in all regions of the world. United Nations Radio produces daily news and current affairs programmes in the six official languages and Portuguese. In late 2002, a survey requested by Member States indicated that about 133 million persons listened to the daily broadcasts at least once a week. Since then, the Department has added 46 new partner broadcasters, raising the total number of partners to 160, with approximately another 75 million listeners. In the light of this proven successful and cost-effective global outreach, Member States approved the regular budget funding for this project for the biennium 2004-2005.

30. In addition to live programmes, United Nations Radio continues to produce weekly programmes in the following eight non-official languages: Bangla, French-Creole, Hindi, Indonesian, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Turkish and Urdu. The programmes are mailed or distributed via the Internet to several other partner stations. A new weekly English-language programme targeting Africa was launched in June and will be followed shortly by one in French. The Department continues to produce special programmes targeting the Asian region.

31. A new electronic multimedia production system has been introduced to streamline the work of radio and photo services, enabling more efficient digital delivery of the Department's radio programmes and photographs. This has improved the sound quality of the Department's radio broadcast programmes. The Department no longer processes photos, and prints far fewer than in the past and now has the capability to transmit photos to news agencies within minutes of an event.

32. The Department continued to provide coverage, through United Nations Television, of meetings, press conferences and special events at Headquarters. Produced in-house, this high-quality video material was distributed to broadcasters throughout the world through the major television news disseminators, including the European Broadcasting Union, the Associated Press Television and Reuters. These television feeds were also available in live webcasts from Headquarters. The ongoing weekly television news feature series "UN in Action", was distributed by the Department in six languages to broadcasters in more than 100 countries. It is also available as streaming video on the United Nations web site. The video television talk show "World Chronicle" was rejuvenated and aired on major cable television stations in some 15 countries, including CNBC World (United States of America), SABC (South Africa), CCTV (China) and Orbit Communications (with satellite links in the Middle East). Both "UN in Action" and "World Chronicle" have extended their audiences as new international television stations formed partnerships with the Department to broadcast its products, including the annual United Nations "Year in Review", which is available in the six official languages. Over the past year, the Department has also considerably expanded its efforts to develop co-productions with major television broadcasters in different regions of the world, including Arts and Entertainment, Bloomberg TV, Discovery Channel International, RTVE (Spain and Latin America), RTP (Portugal and Africa) and Shanghai Media Group (China).

C. Other services to the media

33. The Department facilitates access by the media worldwide to cover United Nations activities at Headquarters by providing accreditation, liaison and other services. Between July 2003 and July 2004, and especially during periods of intense media interest, such as the General Assembly's general debate and meetings of the Security Council on Iraq and the Middle East, the Department issued 3,958 permanent accreditations and 6,229 temporary ones, undertook 17,751 liaison assignments, conducted 148 media tours for visiting foreign press and organized 8,386 stakeouts.

34. In an effort to draw media and public attention to important issues and crisis situations that often remain underreported, the Department launched a new project in April 2004, entitled "Ten stories the world should hear more about". The initiative, undertaken in consultation with the other departments of the Secretariat, as well as United Nations offices and programmes, was launched around World Press Freedom Day (3 May 2004). Through a series of television and radio interviews and op-ed articles, and with the active promotional efforts of United Nations information centres, this initiative has continued to draw keen media interest.

35. Continuous dialogue with media in all parts of the world is an important element of the Department's outreach efforts. As part of this strategy, which has been particularly concerned with the Middle East region, the Department held a successful week-long briefing programme for senior journalists and editors from the Middle East, with the participation of the Secretary-General and other senior United Nations officials. This will be followed by a two-week workshop for print, TV and radio journalists from the region, later in 2004.

36. Information on United Nations activities at Headquarters and abroad is also disseminated utilizing traditional print media, such as press releases, in English and French, and the production of the ever-popular and best-selling *Basic Facts about the United Nations* (a completely updated 2004 edition of which will be published soon) and *UN in Brief*, as well as the *Charter of the United Nations* and *Statute of the International Court of Justice* in all official languages. Press releases, *UN in Brief* and *Image and Reality* are also available electronically through the Internet.

D. United Nations web site

37. The United Nations web site has become a premier tool for reaching target audiences such as the media, non-governmental organizations and academia, as well as an increasing number of people directly, in all parts of the world. The site recorded 2,151 million accesses during 2003, up from 1,695 million during the previous year. The corresponding figure for 1996, the first full year of operations, was 11.5 million accesses. Users from more than 170 countries are viewing nearly one million pages of material daily. These accomplishments were all achieved from within existing resources.

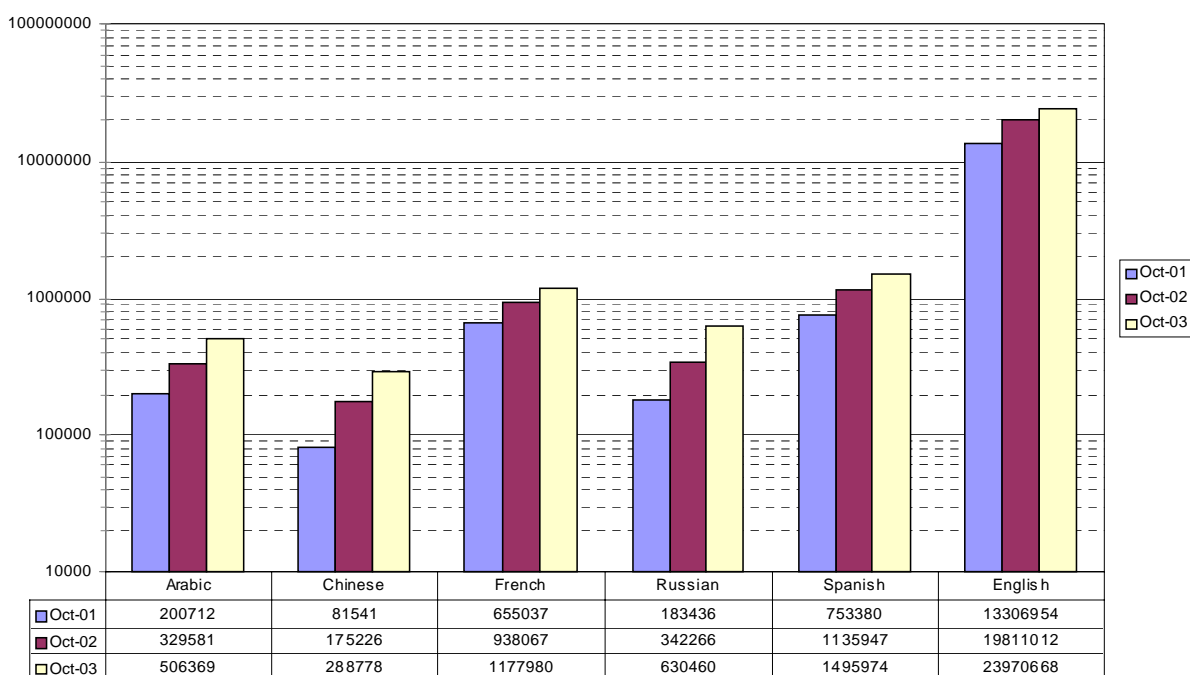
1. Multilingualism on the United Nations web site

38. Increasing numbers of visitors are now using the United Nations web site as a resource across all official languages. The Department of Public Information has been encouraging and assisting other departments in the Secretariat to make their information materials available on the United Nations web site in all the official languages. To further increase the availability of material other than English on the Web, the Department has expanded its partnership with the academic community worldwide to translate information materials. Under the agreement with the University of Salamanca in Spain, its School of Languages has provided over 2,000 pages of material translated into Spanish, at no cost to the Organization. Similar agreements have been concluded with Shaoxin University in China and Minsk State Linguistic University in Belarus, and discussions are at an advanced stage for a similar arrangement for Arabic. The agreement with Minsk State University went into effect in April 2004 and the Department has already received nearly 100 pages of translated text.

39. Today, the official language sites are being used by an ever-increasing number of visitors (see chart 1 below). During the period from June 2003 to June 2004, the highest growth in terms of page views was registered by the Chinese web site, which saw a 271.70 per cent increase. Page view increases registered by other language web sites for the same period are as follows: Arabic (73.78 per cent), English (20.10 per cent), French (30.92 per cent), Russian (79.39 per cent) and Spanish (27.17 per cent). These increases are due in part to the additional resources that have been redeployed to the Web site Section. However, the overall level of resources will continue to constrain the pace at which progress towards full parity across all languages is made.

Chart 1

United Nations web site (un.org) page views: October 2001, 2002, 2003



40. In an important step towards linguistic parity on the United Nations web site, the Department completed work to make the United Nations News Centre online portal and the associated United Nations News Service available in all the official languages. Already one of the most heavily visited areas of the United Nations site, the multilingual news portal is drawing a steadily growing number of visitors, with the United Nations News Centre in English now exceeding five million page views a month. Using the database-driven news feed feature, an increasing number of United Nations departments and offices are automatically retrieving the latest stories from the United Nations News Centre onto their own web pages. An increasingly important role in bringing the latest news from the United Nations to a diverse worldwide audience is played by the United Nations News Centre's e-mail service in English and French, which now has over 27,000 subscribers in more than 100 countries. Work is currently under way to further enhance this service and to make it available in other official languages.

2. Webcasting

41. The successful development of the in-house capability for live webcasting has expanded the transparency of the Organization by providing webcasts of meetings of the General Assembly and Security Council, as well as the daily press briefings and most press conferences and other public events. More than 10,000 video clips are being viewed daily by visitors to the United Nations web site from all over the world through a completely redesigned webcast page. Webcast technology has also allowed the Department to improve internal communications with its offices away from Headquarters.

3. Search capability

42. The search capability on the web site has also been greatly improved, making materials easier to locate. All 177 search pages have been revised to enable the use of the new "Google" search engine since its formal installation in August 2003. Over 120 new subcollections have been set up to permit searches within areas of the site; 260 key matches have been incorporated; search logs are now analysed every week to determine what users are searching for and special pages and/or key-matches are then put into place to facilitate subsequent searches.

4. Accessibility by users with disabilities

43. The Department is undertaking a series of special measures to enhance the accessibility of the United Nations web site to users with disabilities, in consultation with the other offices of the Secretariat. The technical guidelines on United Nations web site development issued by the Working Group on Internet Matters are being revised to incorporate the requirements to ensure access to the web site by users with disabilities. Linked to this question is the use of appropriate guidelines and the need to consult on these issues, in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, with the representatives of people with disabilities. The top layer pages of the web site are being analysed and will be revised to conform to agreed requirements. In addition, the Working Group on Internet Matters has brought the issue to the attention of all content-providing offices, so that those offices can do the same for their pages.

V. Library services

A. Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries

44. The Steering Committee for the Modernization and Integrated Management of United Nations Libraries, established in response to the call for a review of United Nations libraries in General Assembly resolution 56/253 of 24 December 2001, held five meetings, mainly through videoconferencing, from January 2003 to June 2004, to cover a variety of technical and organizational issues. Several of the technical initiatives launched by the Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Department of Public Information, have been completed. These include the online United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS) reference manuals and guides to cataloguing and indexing standards, which have been made available on the United Nations Intranet. In addition, a United Nations Libraries Gateway page has been posted on the Internet, a survey of field libraries undertaken and a listing of journal titles subscribed to by partner libraries has been created. Work has also progressed on increasing the comprehensiveness of the United Nations Official Document System as the core electronic collection of United Nations documentation.

45. The Steering Committee also encouraged support for the creation of a common library in Nairobi. As a result, the United Nations Environment Programme Library in Nairobi has been redesignated as a common library for the United Nations Office at Nairobi and, in June 2004, was renamed the Sergio Vieira de Mello Library.

B. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

46. As at June 2004, there were 396 active United Nations depository libraries worldwide receiving United Nations documents and publications. During the period under review, 11 libraries converted from paper to electronic deposit, increasing the total number of electronic deposit recipients to 127. Anticipating that the Official Document System would become free of charge in late 2004, a questionnaire distributed to the depository libraries requested information on each library's capability to access the Internet. Approximately 80 per cent of the 366 libraries that responded to the questionnaire indicated that they were "Internet-ready". As more depository libraries in developing countries are able to access the Internet, the importance of training in the use of United Nations electronic resources is increasingly critical to ensure that those libraries can be effective United Nations outreach partners. A workshop was held in Pretoria in July-August 2003 for depository librarians and United Nations staff members from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Hands-on practice enabled participants to become familiar with the Internet and United Nations research tools on the Internet. Additional outreach activities for depository libraries include an alerting service for major United Nations events, reports or services. In 2004, a total of 156 alerts were sent in two e-mail series, UN News Update and UN Deposit Info, to over 300 depository libraries.

47. Over the past year, the Library conducted more than 100 training sessions for some 800 trainees, including Secretariat staff, mission personnel, government

officials, internes, representatives of non-governmental organizations, depository librarians and visitors. To further enhance its outreach activities, the library organized an open house and a “training sampler” during the second quarter of 2004, featuring brief previews of all training courses offered by the library. The sampler, which was attended by over 100 persons, will be offered twice a year in the future.

48. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library web page continues its efforts to expand services available in the six official languages within the limits of resources available. In 2004, the UNBISnet search interface (<http://unbisnet.un.org>) was enhanced to take advantage of improvements made to the underlying software. The most significant change is in the creation of automated daily updated linkages to all of the documentation of the Official Document System for all language versions. A web-based user survey was undertaken, the first to be launched in all six official languages, resulting in over 500 responses. The results are being used to improve and develop library Internet resources.

49. The multilingual UNBIS thesaurus (<http://lib-thesaurus.un.org>) is the subject authority used by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the United Nations Office at Geneva Library, the United Nations Office at Vienna, the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the United Nations Environment Programme. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library has set up focal points for the thesaurus in offices away from Headquarters to encourage their staff's participation in thesaurus development and to ensure that the terminology remains relevant to users.

50. Library staff participate in and contribute to other Secretariat-wide and inter-agency initiatives through the work of the inter-agency Knowledge Sharing and Information Management Group of United Nations System Libraries, which includes the facilitation of access to the documentation systems among United Nations agencies and the United Nations Libraries Shared Catalogue and Public Access System; participation in the Second Administrative-Level Boundaries project of the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group; and through the Global Legal Information Network, a database of laws, regulations and other legal information coordinated by the United States Law Library of Congress.

51. Volumes 55 and 56 of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, covering all the major activities of the Organization during 2001 and 2002, were published in August 2003 and July 2004, respectively. Work is now under way on the 2003 volume. A CD-ROM package containing the first 55 volumes of the *Yearbook* is currently available, and an updated package that will include volume 56 is under preparation.

52. The Library brings high-quality commercial information resources to desktops of official users. Acquisition of these services is coordinated for the United Nations system libraries by the United Nations System Electronic Information Acquisitions Consortium, led by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library.

VI. Outreach services

A. Non-governmental organizations

53. The Department of Public Information continued to provide an intensive information programme for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including weekly NGO briefings, an orientation programme for new NGO representatives and communications workshops, in addition to the NGO web site and the NGO Resource Centre.

54. The fifty-sixth annual DPI/NGO Conference, entitled “Human security and dignity: fulfilling the promise of the United Nations”, held in September 2003, drew 2,000 participants from more than 600 United Nations-affiliated NGOs in 86 countries around the world, 46 per cent of which came from 61 developing countries, double that of previous Conferences. Introduction of an interactive web site enabled NGOs and the general public access to live video and audio webcasts of all plenary sessions. The fifty-seventh Conference, to be held in September 2004, and entitled “Millennium Development Goals: civil society takes action”, will feature parallel events held in cooperation with United Nations information centres in all regions of the world.

55. In the course of the year, the Department associated 62 new NGOs and disassociated 77 organizations that no longer met the criteria for association, bringing the total number of NGOs associated with the Department to 1,501 as at July 2004.

B. Educational outreach

56. The Department now offers a wide range of information and activities aimed at students of all ages, from kindergarten through graduate school and beyond. The Cyberschoolbus web site of its Global Learning and Teaching Project, which targets school-age children, continues to receive recognition, including receipt of the International Earth Day Award from the United States-based Earth Society Foundation and a citation from the Education Committee of the Conference of NGOs, as a model of good practices for its “Pumped Up for Peace” project that helps communities around the world without access to safe drinking water. The project is working closely with the Department for Disarmament Affairs and an advisory group of educators to establish developmentally appropriate guidelines for producing curriculum materials on disarmament, and to create new educational materials on this issue.

57. The principal vehicle of higher educational outreach is the *UN Chronicle*. Published quarterly in the six official languages, the *UN Chronicle* has strengthened its targeting of educators and institutions of higher education by featuring thematic clusters that can also be used as part of curricula. During the past year, the English online version registered an average of 72,500 page views per month, while the French online version registered 27,000 page views per month. These are augmented by the UN Chronicle Feature Service, which, through the United Nations information centres, disseminates articles from eminent contributors to newspapers and magazines worldwide. In addition, the UN Chronicle Unit regularly broadcasts e-Alerts, highlighting a specific theme. A total of 14 e-Alerts were sent

between July 2003 and June 2004, and archives of all issued alerts are available online.

58. The Department launched a seminar series entitled “Unlearning Intolerance”, which began on 21 June 2004 with a day-long meeting on “Confronting anti-Semitism: education for tolerance and understanding”. The seminar, attended by over 600 persons, was a successful first step in engaging civil society leaders and a wider audience in ways to best meet the challenge of this form of discrimination. In a survey distributed at the venue, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being “not useful” and 5 being “very useful”, participants rated the seminar very useful overall (4.38). The “Unlearning Intolerance” series will continue to examine different manifestations of intolerance and explore ways in which education and civil society can work to help overcome them, with a seminar on Islamophobia scheduled to be held later in 2004.

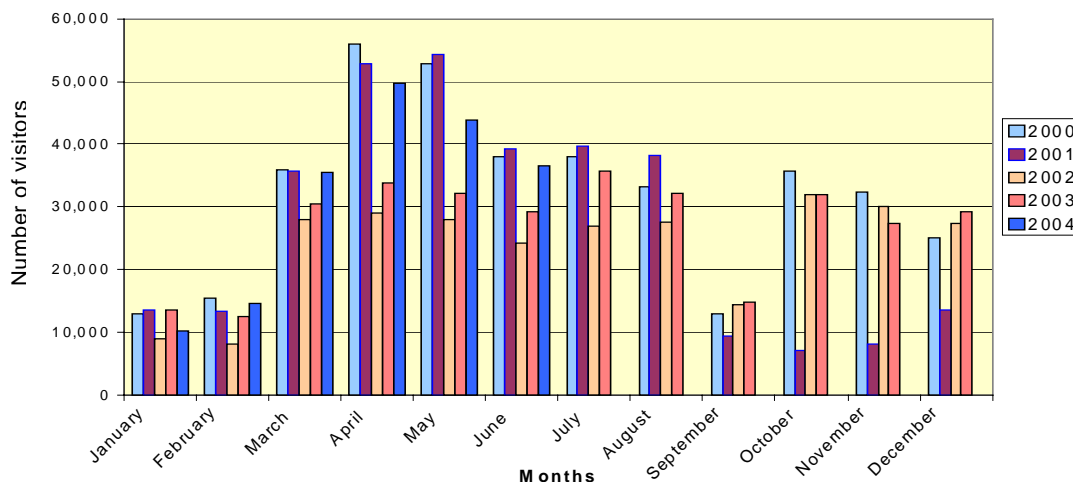
59. The groundbreaking television series, *What’s Going On?*, initiated by the UN Works programme and hosted by United Nations Messengers of Peace and Goodwill Ambassadors, concluded in May 2004. Exploring critical global issues through the personal stories of children, the series is now being marketed to international broadcasters and to schools. UN Works also initiated a partnership with Discovery Communications Inc., in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to produce and broadcast television spots about cultural diversity and indigenous people.

C. Public relations

Guided tours

60. Over the past year, the Department has continued to engage in a wide range of outreach activities through its Public Relations Section. Some activities, such as the guided tours operation, have a history that is almost as long as that of the Organization itself, while others have arisen from new initiatives, such as the filming of the movie “The Interpreter” on location at United Nations Headquarters. The Department hopes that when released next year, the film will motivate its audiences to learn more about the Organization, particularly at a time of increased media attention to the United Nations, and a general rebound in tourism, both of which have also led to a rise in the number of visitors taking the guided tour. This year, attendance has exceeded expectations by nearly 10 per cent, and is finally approaching the level that existed prior to 11 September 2001 (see chart 2 below).

Chart 2
Guided tour attendance (2000-2004)



Exhibits

61. A total of 24 exhibits mounted over the past year have covered the range of issues before the Organization, including Africa, ageing, hunger, HIV/AIDS, indigenous peoples and World Heritage sites. Such exhibits are generally sponsored by a United Nations agency, programme or department and are often mounted in cooperation with NGOs or the private sector, and can move to additional venues after their display at Headquarters with the support of the Department. For example, a World Food Programme exhibit, entitled "Food for Life", was installed in downtown Manhattan, in New York, after it concluded its run in the United Nations Visitors' Lobby; and another major exhibit, commemorating the birth centenary of Ralph Bunche, "Ralph Bunche: diplomat for peace and justice", which ran from 11 April to 4 July 2004, later travelled to the Queens Museum of Art in New York for installation there.

62. The Department has increasingly sought to integrate exhibits with other outreach efforts. Ralph Bunche's legacy, for example, was also the subject of three seminars organized during the year by the Department in cooperation with the Ralph Bunche Institute at the time of the exhibit. Similarly, an exhibition of photographs on the Jewish Diaspora coincided with the seminar "Confronting anti-Semitism". Seminars on Ralph Bunche were held on 4 September 2003 (on the Middle East), 20 November 2003 (on peacekeeping) and on 5 February 2004 (on civil society). The seminar on anti-Semitism was held on 21 June 2004 and the Diaspora exhibit ran from 15 June to 9 July.

Special events at United Nations Headquarters

63. Efforts continued this past year, as part of an initiative launched by the Secretary-General, to reinvigorate traditional sources of support for the Organization and its objectives. A day-long series of briefings and interactive discussions on issues before the United Nations was held on 7 October 2003 for

over 100 African-American leaders of civil society, NGOs, academic institutions and local governments. The Department also organized an open house for nearly 400 New York City school principals on United Nations Day, to encourage them to send their students to visit and learn more about the United Nations.

64. The Department has made greater use of new technologies to link with students and other groups in locations away from Headquarters. With the help of videoconferencing, students participating at United Nations Headquarters in programmes for the International Day of Peace, Human Rights Day and World Environment Day have shared their experiences with others at sites that included Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Croatia, the Dominican Republic, Greece, Mexico, Sierra Leone, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as at several peacekeeping missions and at a number of locations in the United States. An added feature of such programmes this past year was the ability of those watching the webcast to interact with those at Headquarters, sending questions and comments from around the world to bulletin boards set up in collaboration with the United Nations Cyberschoolbus.

Training programme for journalists from developing countries

65. Yet another area of outreach is the Department's six-week programme for journalists from developing countries, renamed last year the Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme, in honour of a young radio journalist and staff member from the Department who was among those killed in the 19 August 2003 bombing of the United Nations office in Baghdad. This programme, established in 1981 by the General Assembly, provides young media professionals from developing countries the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the work of the United Nations and to cover United Nations activities on behalf of their news organizations. As of 2003, 341 broadcasters and journalists from 150 countries had taken part in the programme. In 2004, the training programme will be held from 7 September to 15 October, with a total of 12 print and broadcast journalists from Belize, Brunei Darussalam, Djibouti, Grenada, Guyana, Iraq, Latvia, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Pakistan, Romania, Solomon Islands and Somalia.

D. Partnerships

66. In April 2004, the Department was given responsibility for the programme of activities of the nine United Nations Messengers of Peace, a function for which the Office of External Relations in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General had prior responsibility. Using their time and talent, these distinguished men and women help to focus global attention on issues such as post-conflict situations in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, human rights, least developed countries, disarmament, poverty eradication, HIV/AIDS, the needs of children worldwide, refugees, women's empowerment and girls' education, and the observance of the International Day of Peace. In 2003, five Messengers of Peace — Mohammad Ali, Anna Cataldi, Michael Douglas, Jane Goodall and Elie Wiesel — participated in a videoconference for students organized by the Department in observance of the International Day of Peace. The Department will continue to work closely with the Messengers to maximize their unique outreach ability and will also work with other United Nations entities in respect of their individual goodwill ambassador programmes.

67. In its mission to promote an informed understanding of the purposes and activities of the Organization and its identification with the peoples whom it serves, the Department will collaborate with external partners on a range of activities in observance of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations in 2005.

E. Sales and marketing

68. During the period under review, two notable developments were the introduction of a multilingual e-commerce web site for the sale of publications, and the launch, in conjunction with the Statistical Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, of the online database UNCOMTRADE. Marketing campaigns undertaken included 20,000 copies of the new United Nations publications catalogue, distributed in January in print and CD-ROM format; advertising in targeted media to promote new titles; distribution to selected customer groups of thematic flyers and brochures in print and electronic format; and subscribers to *E-news*, the monthly publications newsletter online, benefited from regular information on upcoming publications. Over 500,000 potential customers were reached during the period. The New York Bookshop also launched a monthly newsletter and e-mailed it to all New York-based staff and permanent missions, organized 18 book-signing events and introduced a gift card and a frequent purchase card.

69. As in previous years, the Department actively pursued cooperation with other funds and programmes to support the promotion of their books. An agreement was reached with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to promote a select list of their titles through the sales programme. *Development Business*, itself a product of cooperation between the Organization, the World Bank and the regional development banks, expanded its coverage of procurement notices to include major United Nations bid notices and introduced a new subscriber management system.

F. Copyright and external publishing

70. During the period under review, the contracts for the co-publishing of the *UN Chronicle* in Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Spanish were successfully renewed for the biennium 2004-2005 with a number of publishers. The United Nations quarterly publication will thus continue to be available in all six official languages, as the English and French issues are produced in-house via cost-effective printing arrangements. Agreements were also signed with a number of companies specialized in electronic publishing to promote, distribute, and sell United Nations publications online, via their services, in electronic format. As a result of those agreements, a significant increase in dissemination of United Nations titles is expected.

VII. Culture of evaluation

71. As part of a three-year collaborative project with the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in compliance with Member States' mandate to evaluate all Department of Public Information activities (General Assembly resolution 57/300 of 20 December 2002), the Department has enabled its managers to be increasingly

competent in assessing results, while ensuring accountability, through an annual programme impact review. Similar to the current biennial budget and the new strategic framework for the period 2006-2007, the annual review uses a results-based management template, but is designed as an internal tool to assess performance. Therefore, it includes a far greater level of detail on measuring results than the information for compliance with reporting to intergovernmental and oversight bodies, such as the programme performance report. At the present halfway point through the three-year endeavour with the Office of Internal Oversight Services, Department of Public Information managers are in the process of applying lessons learned to refine their self-evaluation methodologies. The baseline data collected as part of the review were also incorporated into the present report.

72. This shift has been achieved without additional resources. Programme managers have successfully measured reach and client satisfaction with the quality of Department of Public Information products and activities. Where practicable, the next step would be to collect feedback through large-scale audience research worldwide in order to track opinions and awareness and understanding of the image and the work of the Organization as a whole.

VIII. Conclusions

73. The communications and public information challenges facing the United Nations are best handled when its messages are strategically targeted, the most effective tools of dissemination are used and the extent of their effectiveness is continually monitored and evaluated.

74. Through the reorganization process, the Department of Public Information has acquired the tools it needed to deliver on the challenges set for it in my 2002 report on strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change. After a period of transition, which entailed numerous client meetings, communications strategies and defining objectives, initial problems with the untested new structures and processes have been overcome. The reformed and restructured Department now understands what is expected of it, is mastering the means to deliver on those expectations and has gained practical experience in their execution. It is ready to apply the lessons learned, as well as its new-found confidence, to further improve the products and services it offers. By reaffirming their support for the new direction the Department has taken, Member States can play a key role in bringing their United Nations closer to people around the world.

Notes

¹ *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/59/21).*