



General Assembly

Distr.: General
7 February 2022

Original: English

Committee on Information

Forty-fourth session

3 May 2022–13 May 2022

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Consideration of reports submitted by the Secretary-General

Activities of the Department of Global Communications: strategic communications services

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution [76/84](#) B, provides a summary of advances made by the Department of Global Communications, from 1 July 2021 to 31 January 2022, in promoting the work of the United Nations to a global audience through its strategic communications services.

The strategic communications services subprogramme is one of three subprogrammes of the Department, and is implemented by the Strategic Communications Division, which develops and carries out strategies for communicating United Nations messages on key issues. The Division also manages the Department's network of field offices, the United Nations information centres.

The activities under the other subprogrammes of the Department, namely, news services, and outreach and knowledge services, are described in separate reports of the Secretary-General ([A/AC.198/2022/3](#) and [A/AC.198/2022/4](#), respectively).

* [A/AC.198/2022/1](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [76/84 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-third session ([A/AC.198/2021/2](#), [A/AC.198/2021/3](#) and [A/AC.198/2021/4](#)) and requested the Secretary-General to continue to report to the Committee on the activities of the Department.
2. The Department hereby submits the information requested on its strategic communications services.
3. The present report covers the activities of the Strategic Communications Division of the Department from 1 July 2021 to 31 January 2022 with respect to its implementation of strategic communications campaigns on key issues. The report also includes a review of how the network of United Nations information centres has implemented the United Nations global communications strategy and strengthened outreach worldwide through stronger cooperation with United Nations resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams.
4. In addition, the report illustrates how the Department has continued to adapt its work at Headquarters and in the field through creative approaches to delivering on its priorities in the challenging operating environment of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic as well as combating the pandemic itself, including by leading and coordinating crisis communications and countering misinformation and disinformation.

II. Responding to the pandemic

5. During the reporting period, the Department of Global Communications, together with the World Health Organization (WHO), continued to lead the coordination of communications across the United Nations system regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department prioritized COVID-19-related messaging and adapted its work to reach the widest possible audiences despite the constraints imposed by the pandemic.
6. Access to vaccines featured prominently in United Nations communications, including through the “Verified” campaign designed to combat misinformation regarding the virus. The Department focused on specific regions and thematic areas by promoting on its platforms, for example, the response to the pandemic and preparations for recovery made by pan-African institutions such as the African Union, the African Export-Import Bank and the African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa’s Development, as well as by individual African countries and the United Nations system.
7. With the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Department promoted the policy brief of the Secretary-General entitled “Investing in jobs and social protection for poverty eradication and a sustainable recovery” along with the accompanying high-level event during the opening of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly in September, which stressed how the pandemic had exacerbated inequalities that could undermine trust and solidarity and fuel conflict and forced migration.
8. The Department also continued to organize events both virtually and in a hybrid format, including the Sustainable Development Goals media zone during the opening of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly; the “COP26 Dialogues” during the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held from 31 October to 12 November

in Glasgow, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; the United Nations International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East in November; the sixth iteration of training for senior staff from agencies, funds, programmes and peace operations on communicating on sexual exploitation and abuse in November; and the training programme for Palestinian journalists held from 19 November to 22 December 2021.

9. In the absence of traditional in-person activities to mark Nelson Mandela International Day (18 July), the Department created the “ActNow x Mandela Day” challenge as part of the ActNow campaign for individual climate action. People were invited to undertake activities in their local communities in support of the ideals espoused by Nelson Mandela. As of the end of November 2021, some 86,000 actions, including 70,000 “acts of kindness”, had been registered on the ActNow app.

III. Crisis communications coordination at Headquarters and in the field

10. During the period under review, the Department of Global Communications, together with WHO, served as the communications lead advising the United Nations COVID-19 Crisis Management Team at the principal level. The Department coordinated the United Nations system communications response to the pandemic through the crisis cell – co-chaired by the Department and WHO – of the United Nations Communications Group, which consists of United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes as well as regional commissions.

11. The cell met after each meeting of the Crisis Management Team to agree on strategy, messaging and approaches to reputational issues and issued weekly updates on messaging, monitoring, content and planning. The cell briefed the United Nations Communications Group every two weeks and the United Nations information centres and communications staff in resident coordinator offices monthly. Those efforts helped ensure that the voice of the United Nations remained coherent and its activities aligned. That continuity was also reflected in the regularly updated web portal for consolidated and practical information on the response of the Organization to the pandemic.

12. Apart from co-leading the coordination of United Nations system COVID-related communications, the Department expanded its crisis communications support consistent with the United Nations global communications strategy. That included working more closely with field offices as well as with the United Nations Operations and Crisis Centre. It also entailed harnessing digital monitoring tools to improve how the Department identified potential crises and reputational risks – as when the Department convened United Nations Communications Group crisis communications cells to respond to situations in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Haiti, as well as to allegations of misconduct within the Organization raised by *New York Magazine* in an article published in September 2021.

13. In their weekly meetings, the cells on Afghanistan and Ethiopia brought together United Nations system communicators and connected colleagues from the field with those at the regional levels and at Headquarters to share messaging, monitoring, media outreach and content plans and to discuss issues related to the Organization’s reputation. In the case of Afghanistan, the Department worked alongside the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to develop a communications and advocacy strategy for the rights of women and girls.

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

IV. Building trust and combating misinformation

15. With its factual, science-based information aimed at countering misinformation on COVID-19 and strengthening vaccine confidence, equity and solidarity, the “Verified” campaign – launched by the Department of Global Communications in May 2020 in partnership with Purpose, a social mobilization organization – has grown into a global movement. In collaboration with over 200 partners around the world, “Verified” has produced and disseminated more than 2,000 pieces of content in over 60 languages since its launch, from memes to music videos, that have reached more than a billion people. United Nations information centres have become an integral part of the campaign, which ranges from centres in New Delhi, Pretoria and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with their large country-specific campaigns, to smaller offices in Dhaka, Tashkent and Warsaw that have translated and adapted global materials to local languages and circumstances. On United Nations social media channels, “Verified” content has consistently ranked among the top-performing weekly material across all platforms.

16. The pandemic is far from over. Outbreaks persist and variants emerge even as pandemic-related fatigue sets in and access to protective equipment and vaccines remains uneven. The “Verified” campaign, however, has been evolving. The coronavirus has remained the common enemy, but a proliferation of misinformation and disinformation has led to a growing distrust of public health information and institutions. That was the focus of a side event in September 2021 during the opening of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly, co-organized by the Department together with the Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology, the Global Pulse initiative, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and WHO.

17. Launched at the end of June 2021, the “Pause” initiative is a part of the “Verified” campaign that encourages people to pause before they share online content and so help stop the spread of misinformation about COVID-19. The initiative was showcased during Global Media and Information Literacy Week (24–31 October 2021) at a high-level virtual event organized by the Department together with Purpose. The related promotion of “Pause”, using advertisement credits provided by Facebook, reached 110 million people worldwide and generated over 500,000 click-throughs to the “Verified” website, 62,000 post reactions, over 3,000 comments and more than 4,000 instances of content sharing.

18. In conjunction with the Global Media and Information Literacy Week, several United Nations offices organized media and information literacy events, including the United Nations information centre in Ankara and the United Nations Information Service in Vienna, which translated “Verified” and “Pause” content into German, Hungarian, Slovak, Slovenian and Turkish and shared that content widely. The information centre in New Delhi and the resident coordinator office in India joined the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in a media workshop on refugees. Together with the UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office in Abuja and the Lagos State University School of Communications, the information centre in Lagos organized a webinar that called on the Government of Nigeria to support making information accessible to all. The United Nations information centre in Washington, D.C., convened digital communications and social media literacy experts to discuss the applicability of the “Verified” campaign in other areas of United Nations work and its relevance to the recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in his report entitled “Our Common Agenda”.

19. In November, together with the instructional website wikiHow, “Verified” launched a digital literacy course on combating misinformation online – delivered by way of email but also downloadable in Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Portuguese

and Spanish – that was widely promoted through the “Verified” campaign and wikiHow, as well as by United Nations information centres. Throughout the reporting period, the Department of Global Communications briefed regional groups of field offices on the “Verified” campaign and provided training on tackling misinformation online through the United Nations System Staff College.

20. With the support of United Nations information centres, the “Verified” campaign began partnering with the Oxford Internet Institute and regional research partners to conduct a series of activities in Brazil, India and Nigeria. In each country, researchers will join public groups on the social media platform WhatsApp to help counter misinformation about COVID-19 with factual, science-based information and assess the response to their efforts. By testing different content variables, including tone, format and specificity, the teams will be able to reach generalizable findings on how to use communications to limit the impact and spread of misinformation.

21. To guide its work going forward, the “Verified” campaign gathered lessons learned regarding the shifting communications needs related to COVID-19, especially with regard to cultural and contextual relevance. One example is the “Zwakala” campaign in South Africa, for which local artists produced murals across six provinces to raise COVID-19 awareness, and which was promoted in 16 television and 32 radio public service announcements in five local languages. With support from national broadcasters Multichoice and the South African Broadcasting Corporation, the United Nations information centre in Pretoria has worked since July with the Department of Health of South Africa, the United States Agency for International Development and the United Nations Children’s Fund to expand the campaign nationwide.

22. Producing targeted content to engage hard-to-reach audiences lay at the heart of the collaboration of the information centre in New Delhi and the resident coordinator office with local non-governmental organizations and activists to reach slum dwellers in Delhi and women in the state of Bihar, where traditional public health and communications infrastructures are too weak to effectively disseminate public health information. The collaboration reached more than 25,000 households in 33 informal settlements across Delhi; created a network of 150 “‘Verified’ Saathis” (community leaders) in Delhi; involved 10,000 vaccinated auto-rickshaw drivers and street vendors in promoting vaccination; collaborated with the podcast “All Indians Matter” on an episode on vaccine hesitancy; engaged with more than 85 groups, with a total of 8,600 members, on WhatsApp to share 105 pieces of “Verified” content over the course of three months; and engaged more than 10,000 teachers across Bihar to watch a webinar on debunking myths about vaccination for women.

23. In July, the United Nations information centre in Rio de Janeiro helped produce the online music festival entitled “#EachOneOfUs” with the support of TikTok. The youth-oriented festival received 227,449 total views and 13.8 million views related to the hashtag on TikTok, while related media articles recorded 42 million readers. In August and September, the Brazilian Olympic and Paralympic Committees collaborated with the “Verified” campaign and the information centre on an initiative entitled “#OneSingleTeam” to promote unity in the face of COVID-19, reaching 3.9 million people on social media and 4.0 million through media articles.

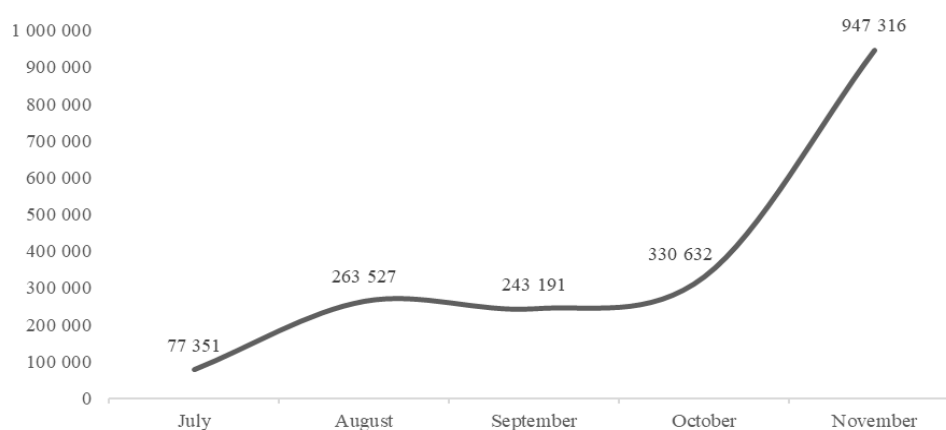
24. The “Verified” initiative entitled “#OnlyTogether”, launched in March 2021, has continued to help galvanize support for vaccine equity. As of mid-December, the hashtag #OnlyTogether has been used a total of 28 million times, and the initiative has reached almost 10 million people.

25. Building on its experience with countering misinformation on COVID-19, the Department expanded its efforts to address climate change. As a result of a collaboration between the Department and the Internet search engine Google aimed at disseminating factual and trustworthy climate information, every search by Google users for “climate

change” since 25 October 2021 has led to authoritative information from the United Nations. Short and easy-to-understand text blurbs and visuals on the causes and effects of climate change, as well as on individual actions that people can take to help tackle the climate crisis, are displayed in the search page results in English, French and Spanish with links to the United Nations website on climate action, and have contributed to an increase of nearly 950,000 views of the webpage in November, against an average of around 100,000 page views per month over the first half of 2021 (see figure I). Some 682,000 (72.0 per cent) of those page views in November were in English, 198,000 (20.9 per cent) in Spanish, 25,500 (2.7 per cent) in Arabic, 19,000 (2.0 per cent) in Chinese, 12,500 (1.3 per cent) in French and 10,000 (1.1 per cent) in Russian. The collaboration with Google is expected to expand in 2022 to other languages, including Arabic, Chinese and Russian as well as Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Portuguese.

Figure I

Monthly page views of the climate action website, July–November 2021



26. In October 2021, efforts to counter misinformation and promote accurate, science-based information on climate change expanded to YouTube, where, since 3 November, in response to every search for a climate change video in the English language, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Portuguese and Spanish users have seen an information panel displaying a definition and a link to the United Nations webpage entitled “What is climate change?”. That webpage became the most-visited page on the United Nations climate website managed by the Department, accruing 214,000 views during the two weeks of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, up from 23,000 views in the preceding two weeks. That addition also greatly increased traffic to the respective webpages of the United Nations information centres. The number of visitors to the webpage on Japanese climate change maintained by the information centre in Tokyo, for example, grew in November from 100 to 1,000 per day, with 80 per cent of visitors coming from YouTube.

27. Partnerships involving other platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and WhatsApp, have helped the Department address online misinformation and engage social media users on issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals, climate action, COVID-19 and vaccines. Facebook and Instagram provided support through the contribution of advertisement credits for the “Verified” campaign. LinkedIn contributed advertisement credits for the “Verified” campaign that allowed for targeted messaging and audience selection with the goal of engaging priority stakeholders, including the corporate sector, and raising awareness of the need for vaccine equity. Through an advertisement grant effective as of August, LinkedIn supported campaigns on issues including COVID-19 recovery, the climate crisis and racial and gender inequality.

28. Working with United Nations system entities, the Department continued to advocate that social media platforms implement or improve existing policies on misinformation and hate speech.

V. Communications campaigns

A. Sustainable development

29. The Sustainable Development Goals Moment that kicked off the high-level segment of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly on 20 September – for which the Department of Global Communications produced a dedicated platform and packages of material for social media in nine languages – saw high audience engagement. The Department launched the “Keeping the Promise” initiative as the primary social media initiative for that week, inviting people around the world to make a commitment, inspired by the Sustainable Development Goals, that was actionable in their everyday lives to help achieve a better world for all. Serving as special envoys of the President of the Republic of Korea, the music group BTS helped boost participation in the initiative, as more than 110,000 people shared their own promises.

30. The Sustainable Development Goals Moment reached new audiences across the world and achieved the highest numbers seen on United Nations social media platforms in the past two years. Nearly 4 million engagements resulted from 108 posts published in nine languages across platforms managed by the social media team of the Department. Posts related to the BTS performance and the Sustainable Development Goals Moment ranked among the top five best-performing content on the United Nations Facebook and Twitter accounts for the month of September in Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Spanish. On United Nations Instagram accounts, BTS-related content was among the top five posts of the year in English, French, Hindi, Kiswahili, Portuguese and Spanish. The BTS performance was among the top-performing video posts of the year on the United Nations Instagram and Facebook accounts in Spanish, with 180,000 views. On the United Nations Twitter account in English, a post featuring the BTS performance with the hashtag #GlobalGoals received the greatest number of likes of any tweet since 2020, with 2 million engagements and 3.1 million views.

31. The Sustainable Development Goals Moment also contributed to the growth of the Sustainable Development Goals website maintained by the Department, accruing some 3.7 million views in the month of September 2021 alone, an increase of some 400,000 views compared with the same month in 2020.

32. In July, the Department worked with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to promote the high-level political forum on sustainable development, coverage of which increased by 29 per cent over that of the 2020 forum. More than 4,500 related articles were published in 141 countries and territories in 57 languages. Members of the Sustainable Development Goals Media Compact, such as ANSA (Italy), Tass (Russian Federation) and Youm7 (Egypt) covered the forum extensively.

33. The Sustainable Development Goals Media Compact, through which media and entertainment companies worldwide pledge to leverage their resources and talent in support of the Goals, remained another way in which the Department focused attention on the Goals. As of mid-December 2021, the Compact had more than 250 members, with the most recent including the Burundi-based Buntu radio-television network and the South Africa-based Multichoice network, the Japan-based Tokyo Broadcasting System-led Japan News Network (JNN) of 28 television stations and the United States of America-based mass media conglomerate Condé Nast. Members receive access to specialized content about the Goals, opportunities for interviews with United Nations

officials and experts and the opportunity to participate in activities such as the Sustainable Development Goals media zone. The media zone enjoyed strong media engagement in 2021, and included the Al-Jazeera English broadcast “The Stream”, which was co-hosted by the Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications during the high-level segment of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

Climate action

34. The strategic approach of the Department to climate communications had an impact during the second half of 2021, as the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow attracted an exceptionally high level of public interest.

35. The op-ed of the Secretary-General entitled “The Glasgow climate test” was placed by United Nations information centres 88 times in 44 countries in 19 languages just prior to the Conference. During the Conference, the Department’s media monitoring showed strong coverage in social and traditional media of the opening speech of the Secretary-General to the World Leaders Summit on 1 November; his tweet on the Joint Glasgow Declaration on Enhancing Climate Action in the 2020s issued by China and the United States on 10 November; his interview with the Associated Press entitled “UN chief says global warming goal on ‘life support’”; his remarks to the global climate action high-level event on 11 November; and his video message immediately after the adoption of the Glasgow Climate Pact on 13 November.

36. On social media, the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow ranked among the top-performing United Nations content of 2021, with videos from the venue receiving hundreds of thousands of views and positive comments. A range of multilingual products, including quotation and fact cards, highlighted key messages regarding the need for bolder climate action in the lead-up to and during the event. Content featured youth climate voices from across the world, including live social events, and showcased climate solutions and innovations. Several high-profile influencers amplified climate messaging: United Nations Messenger of Peace Leonardo DiCaprio and Sustainable Development Goals Advocate Dia Mirza, for example, changed the link on their Instagram biographies to direct their millions of followers to the United Nations climate action or ActNow websites.

37. In the lead-up to the Conference, numerous national campaigns, conducted in collaboration with Purpose, helped engage young people, entrepreneurs, activists and influencers in support of climate action. The United Nations information centre in New Delhi and the United Nations in India launched the “We the Change” campaign with 17 young climate champions that invited young people in India to share their climate solutions. The campaign reached over 27 million people on digital platforms and generated more than 166 stories in leading publications such as *The Times of India* and the news and media website Firstpost.

38. The information centre in Rio de Janeiro launched the “Nós O Movimento” (We the Movement) campaign that gained an audience of 46 million through short videos displayed in office building elevators, shopping centres and public spaces throughout Brazil. Digital panels in Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo that displayed messages about climate impacts and the urgency to act reached another 1.9 million people.

39. The launch of the United Nations campaign “Raise the Game for Climate Action” in South Africa in July was covered by the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Twitter cafés hosted live discussions with government officials, activists and influencers; short videos of “changepreneurs” (community, business and thought leaders seen to be making a difference) were distributed across social media platforms; murals in local townships allowed the public to access a campaign video through a QR Code providing free Wi-Fi, reaching an estimated 400,000 people; and

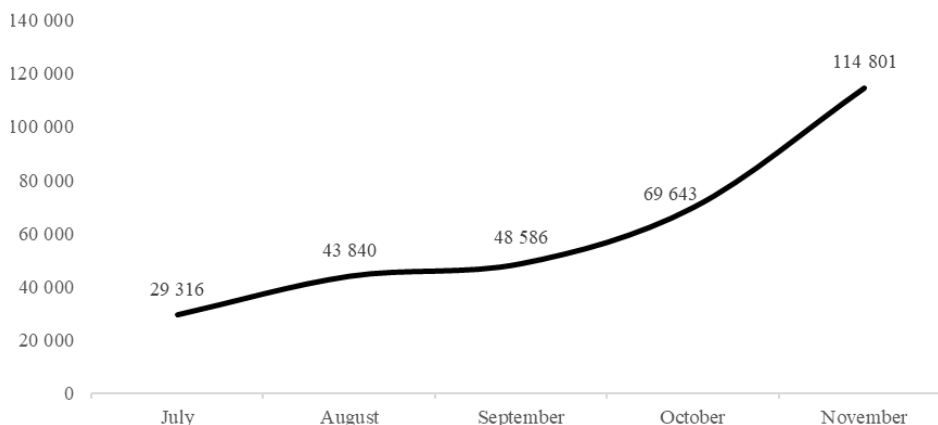
community radio programmes in local languages delivered messages on climate action to almost 300,000 people.

40. The launch in August of the report of Working Group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, entitled *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, received strong social and traditional media coverage and engaged influencers. Extensive reporting by major outlets worldwide included news alerts, front-page articles and in-depth articles that explained the relevant concepts. The warning of the Secretary-General in the light of the report, that the climate crisis constituted a “code red for humanity”, was widely quoted, generating headlines across regions and languages. Messengers of Peace and Goodwill Ambassadors ranging from Jane Goodall to Aidan Gallagher and Yo-Yo Ma helped amplify the message of the Secretary-General on social media.

41. The United Nations campaign for individual action on climate change, ActNow, recorded another 1.5 million actions logged through the related mobile app and chatbot during the reporting period, reaching 4.5 million actions, while webpage views were almost four times higher in November 2021 compared with July (see figure II). Some 66 per cent of ActNow page views in November were in English, 23 per cent in Spanish, almost 5 per cent in French, 4 per cent in Chinese and 1 per cent each in Arabic and Russian. To coincide with the opening of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, the Facebook Messenger bot, which allows people to learn about sustainable habits and log their actions, was updated and relaunched in several languages with more engaging visual content, and was also used for the first time on Instagram, which attracted a younger demographic.

Figure II

Monthly page views of the ActNow website, July–November 2021



42. Cooperation with the creative industry helped boost the ActNow campaign. In July, the fictional character “Peter Rabbit” served as the centrepiece of a climate action campaign carried out in collaboration with Sony Pictures Entertainment, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Foundation. Visual and video materials featuring the hashtag #PeterRabbitFoodHero and distributed across United Nations social media channels in multiple languages as well as through the Sony network encouraged people to “#ActNow”.

43. In November, United Nations social media channels and partner networks distributed multilingual materials in nine languages for a worldwide campaign, using the hashtag #TrollsFoodHeroes, with FAO, the United Nations Foundation and DreamWorks Animation to encourage healthy eating and reduce food waste.

B. Human rights

44. In August, ahead of the high-level meeting on the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on countering racism, intolerance and discrimination, the Department started the multilingual campaign entitled “#FightRacism” with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The campaign, which ran through Human Rights Day (10 December), addressed racism-related issues and showcased specific actions to help fight racism. Visual identity and multimedia products included a series on inspirational figures fighting xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance featured on the microsite “Durban +20 Sketches”, which received 50,000 views and 5,000 interactions during the high-level segment. Those products ranked among the most engaging social media content of the Department. More than 50,000 interactions resulted from 265 posts across all platforms in nine languages between July and November 2021.

45. The #FightRacism campaign, which was amplified through events and locally relevant content organized and produced by United Nations information centres, also supported internal United Nations efforts to address racism and discrimination through the task force established by the Secretary-General on addressing racism and promoting dignity for all in the United Nations.

46. Human Rights Day was marked by activities organized at United Nations Headquarters in New York and at the United Nations Office at Geneva, with 14 information centres conducting special events, including in Accra; Brazzaville; Bujumbura, Burundi; Kathmandu; Lagos, Nigeria; Lima; Lomé; Lusaka; Manila; Moscow; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Vienna; Windhoek; and Yangon, Myanmar. Targeting young people, the Department leveraged its strategic partnership with the game-based learning platform Kahoot! by refreshing the contents of an online quiz prepared for Human Rights Day in English, French and Spanish.

47. While continuing to support the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024), the Department promoted the newly established International Day for People of African Descent (31 August), for which it created a multilingual website. The Department also supported the celebration of the Day in Costa Rica, led by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

48. During the reporting period, the Department, which is a member of the inter-agency Working Group on Hate Speech, worked with the Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect to promote the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech.

49. For a virtual event organized by the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide to mark the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime (9 December), the Department supported the production of a video featuring first-person accounts of young activists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq and Rwanda that was also promoted on United Nations and partner channels, together with related multilingual social media content.

C. Peace and security

50. The third phase of the “Service and Sacrifice” campaign, thanking troop- and police-contributing countries for their service in United Nations peacekeeping operations, concluded in September. Eleven troop- and police-contributing countries, including Austria, Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Finland, Guatemala, Mauritania, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain and Thailand, were featured, bringing the total number of

countries covered to 52. Publicized through the hashtag #ServingForPeace, the campaign ranked consistently among the highest-performing social media posts of the reporting period, generating nearly 400,000 interactions across platforms in nine languages. Content featuring women peacekeepers was particularly popular. The Department worked with the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels, the United Nations Information Service in Vienna and several resident coordinator offices to promote the campaign in local languages. Social media platforms of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence as well as the permanent missions to the United Nations of several countries also promoted the campaign.

51. Together with the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Global Communications promoted the 2021 United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference held in Seoul on 7 and 8 December. That included outreach to media in troop- and police-contributing countries and the creation and sharing of content to build support for the high-level pledging event at the meeting, in addition to highlighting the United Nations partnership with troop- and police-contributing countries and the need to step up support for United Nations peace operations.

52. The Department also promoted a multimedia exhibit on women and peace and security, entitled “In Their Hands: Women Taking Ownership of Peace”, organized by the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and UN-Women, from 15 October to 5 November 2021 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

53. In August, the United Nations information centre in Rabat promoted, through digital, print and broadcast media, the award of the United Nations Service Medal to the Moroccan peacekeepers of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

54. In November, together with the Department of Operational Support, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Global Communications conducted the sixth iteration of training for senior staff from agencies, funds, programmes and peace operations on communicating on sexual exploitation and abuse. More than 20 participants in the virtual workshop heard from United Nations and civil society experts on topics such as communicating strategically on sexual exploitation and abuse, system-wide initiatives to address the problem, effective media interviewing, using social media to communicate policies and practices to the public, the investigative process and the role of communicators, and how to speak to others about the United Nations victim-centred approach.

55. During 2021, the Department chaired, together with UNFPA, a series of task force meetings, comprising United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, on ways to communicate about sexual exploitation and abuse, which developed guidance for United Nations field staff on responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations system staff and affiliated personnel.

56. Working with the Department of Peace Operations and United Nations information centres, the Department of Global Communications produced and disseminated multimedia and multilingual content for the promotion of the Woman Police Officer of the Year award of the year, presented in November to a Nepalese police officer working in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

57. On 16 and 17 November, the Department organized the 2021 virtual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, which addressed the themes “The 30th anniversary of the Madrid Peace Conference: can hope prevail?” and “Solutions journalism in the coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict”.

D. Africa

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

59. Issues covered during the reporting period included addressing the climate crisis, tackling hunger and empowering women and youth. African experts interviewed included the Custodian of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Change Lever of the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021, who urged accelerated action to end hunger and support African women smallholder farmers; the Director for Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management of ECA, who highlighted the priorities for the continent leading up to and after the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow; and a female African climate change researcher and contributing author to the 2021 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, who warned that extreme weather events could be the new normal unless global warming was slowed. An op-ed by the Chair of the African Group of Negotiators ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow provided a fuller understanding of the issues at stake for Africa in the climate negotiations.

60. *Africa Renewal* celebrated the work of young Africans whose innovations and activism were making a positive impact in their societies. Six profiles and several feature articles were published and amplified across social media, including on a Cameroonian climate activist; an Equatorial Guinean fashion entrepreneur; two female scientists from Kenya and Ghana; a Nigerian tech entrepreneur and women's rights activist; a Ugandan technologist; and young Zimbabwean farmers.

61. The magazine continued its coverage of the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement, including the first anniversary of the commencement of free trading on 1 January 2022.

62. To diversify and expand its digital platforms, the Department produced the "Africa Renewal" podcast. Its three pilot episodes focused on trading under the auspices of the Free Trade Area agreement, the new WHO-recommended malaria vaccine for children and the climate crisis in Africa. The podcast was distributed across various Departmental platforms and on Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Spotify.

63. To strengthen its partnerships with civil society in Africa, the Department engaged with groups such as the Climate Smart Agriculture Youth Network, which has a presence in all African countries; the National African Student Association, United States; the non-governmental organization Messengers of Peace – Liberia; the United Nations Students Association at the University of Ghana, Legon; and the community development project Youth Congress of Kenya. In November, the Department partnered with those groups to organize a webinar at which a United Nations climate change expert and two youth leaders discussed the outcomes for Africa of the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow and the role of young people in tackling the climate crisis, looking ahead to the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in 2022.

64. The syndicated news features service of *Africa Renewal* expanded during the review period. A total of 210 articles from the magazine were republished in English,

French and Kiswahili some 1,350 times in more than 150 media outlets in 14 countries around the world, including Ethiopia, France, Ghana, Guinea, Honduras, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States and Zimbabwe.

65. The *Africa Renewal* website enjoyed an average of 190,331 visits per month, with a near-equal number of male and female visitors to the website. The highest number of visitors (38.53 per cent) were in Africa, followed by North America (18.99 per cent) and Europe (12.21 per cent). Those aged 18 to 24 (31.58 per cent) visited the site most often.

VI. United Nations information centres and information services

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

66. The United Nations information centres have played a central role in implementing the global communications strategy by leading or participating in the United Nations communications groups in their host countries. Where integrated with a resident coordinator office, information centres have undertaken that work jointly with those offices to pursue communications priorities and support the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework. To further enhance communications capacity, the Department of Global Communications has leveraged the expertise of its information centre directors, regional public information officers and Headquarters staff to provide specific forms of support. In September, for example, the Director of the United Nations Information Service in Vienna and a regional public information officer based in Istanbul, Turkey, teamed up with the United Nations office in Yerevan to provide the communications group in Armenia with an interactive presentation on the global communications strategy, including a hands-on exercise on adapting the strategy to the country level. Similar direct support on strategic communications planning was undertaken in Angola, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Eswatini, Kazakhstan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

67. As with strategic communications support and advice, the directors of larger information centres and Headquarters staff have provided critical crisis communications guidance to resident coordinators, for example, in Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Myanmar. In November, two crisis communications training sessions were provided to combined audiences of information centre and resident coordinator communications staff, while a dedicated hands-on session was held for 10 information centres in countries affected by crises.

68. United Nations information centres have also played an integral role in United Nations country teams by developing crisis communications strategies and implementing outreach campaigns to address challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation and climate change. In its response to the COVID-19 pandemic in India, the information centre and country team, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, reached more than 1.3 million front-line health workers with training modules on risk communications and community engagement that were translated into 14 regional languages. An estimated additional 600 million people, including the populations of some of the most vulnerable groups in India, received United Nations country team-coordinated COVID-19 prevention and mitigation messages through social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as through print media, national and community radio and national television.

69. The United Nations information centre in Jakarta and the resident coordinator office established a COVID-19 crisis communications cell comprising agencies

responsible for leading preventive efforts to monitor the situation and the United Nations responses in Indonesia and providing advice to the resident coordinator, including key messages, statistics and figures. The information centre in Beirut held meetings of the United Nations communications group every two weeks to coordinate crisis communications amid the multiple crises affecting Lebanon. As a political and humanitarian crisis began to unfold in Afghanistan in August after the Taliban took power, the United Nations communications group in Uzbekistan, led by the United Nations office in Tashkent, mobilized the United Nations system in the country to speak with one voice about the crisis.

B. Building the capacity of United Nations information centres

70. To ensure that field offices are equipped to implement the global communications strategy and support the resident coordinator system, the Department has continued to strengthen the capacity of field staff. Internet conferencing and learning tools were central to connecting thematic experts from Headquarters with field staff, as were skills and language training sessions from internal and external facilitators. In 2021, an average of 112 participants engaged in each of the 45 interactive webinars on issues such as COVID-19 and the situation in Afghanistan, news and social media monitoring, campaign messaging and content and the preparation of strategic calendars based on United Nations system communications priorities. Throughout the year, training sessions were held on core communications skills such as copywriting and storytelling, with an average of more than 160 participants engaging in each of the 13 sessions organized by the Department.

71. The Department provided messaging and customizable products as part of its strategic and crisis communications support to information centres and the network of 131 resident coordinator offices. A knowledge-sharing platform was established to provide up-to-date guidance from across the Department and the United Nations system to facilitate the sharing of best practices.

72. Communications capacity in the field was advanced through regional communities of practice that strengthened cooperation between United Nations information centre and resident coordinator office communications staff and enhanced multilingualism. Such communities of practice include those in anglophone and francophone Africa as well as in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Arab States and subregional groups in Europe and Central Asia.

73. The Department cooperated closely with the Development Coordination Office to ensure that their combined network of communications officers had the guidance and assets needed to maximize the impact of their local communications efforts.

C. Promoting multilingualism

74. Whether by undertaking innovative approaches to communications or using more traditional means, United Nations information centres have achieved their greatest impact by engaging audiences in national or local languages. In producing such material and conducting radio and television interviews and press briefings and participating in talk shows, the information centres have worked in 125 local languages, sign languages and Braille, in addition to the six official languages of the United Nations. A network of information centre language coordinators and regional public information officers has enhanced the dissemination of multilingual communications materials to field communications officers for use locally as well as on global platforms. That network has also facilitated translations ensuring that the messages of the Secretary-General or other high-level officials have reached

audiences in their own languages; 601 placements of op-eds in 70 countries and 32 languages were secured during 2021.

75. The use of radio and television has remained an effective means to reach wider audiences in local languages. Examples include the year-long partnership that began in May 2021 between the information centre in Dhaka and the Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication for the broadcasting of United Nations information in Bangla by 20 community radio stations, and the partnership of the information centre in Beirut with Radio Liban for the live weekly talk show “Hawa El Shabeb” targeting youth in Arabic. In November, the information centre in Beirut produced a video on the Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on pollution, gender inequality, peace and security, and health and education, that was aired by nine television stations and promoted widely on social media, resulting in 400,000 engagements.

76. While United Nations information centres continued to use traditional means such as radio and television to reach audiences, engagement was increasingly driven by websites and social media platforms. The information centre in Rio de Janeiro published news articles in Portuguese on the United Nations country team website that reached an average of 10 million people monthly, while the Portuguese-language Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Vimeo and YouTube accounts attained a reach of more than 2.4 million people as of mid-November 2021. As part of its virtual tour programme, the United Nations Information Service in Vienna enhanced its multilingual social media content on the occasion of the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish mother language days.

77. In July, the information centre in Lusaka adapted video clips from WHO and UNESCO about preventive measures on COVID-19 and the importance of vaccines to the local Kituba and Lingala languages. In August, to support the “Verified” campaign and the “Pause” initiative, the field office in Tashkent held an information session in five local languages – Karakalpak, Tajik and Uzbek, along with English and Russian – with 43 members of the national Association of Volunteers of Uzbekistan, who pledged to pause and check information before sharing it online. In September, the information centre in New Delhi and the United Nations in India produced a video in Indian sign language describing 10 impactful actions that individuals could take to save the planet, while the information centre in Kathmandu developed video clips in Nepalese sign language focused on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

D. Innovating to reach and mobilize wide and diverse audiences

78. In responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, United Nations information centres have had to direct more of their activities to digital platforms. In doing so, they have made use of emerging trends, platforms and partnerships to involve and inspire wider and more diverse audiences looking for information as well as a sense of community on social media. For example, in July, as part of the “TakeAStep” campaign demonstrating ways to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the information centre in Beirut and the communications group in Lebanon began producing video clips with social media influencers that resulted in 442,000 engagements. The United Nations Information Service in Geneva introduced new products such as Instagram reels, short videos and podcasts that helped expand its English and French social media to almost 1.5 million followers as of the end of August.

79. In commemoration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December) in Indonesia, the information centre in Jakarta, ILO and local organizations rolled out a social media campaign entitled “Show Your Sign”, aimed at sensitizing the public to challenges faced by persons with disabilities, and asked

respondents to self-record and share a dance based on a curated song list and corresponding sign language. For its United Nations Day (24 October) campaign on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the centre utilized interactive content, videos using the Google “autocomplete” search function as a storytelling device, and an Instagram story quiz on the Charter of the United Nations that generated almost 16,000 engagements and 41,859 views.

80. In collaboration with Twitter, the non-profit Youth Love Egypt Foundation, the local French embassy and United Nations Volunteers, the information centre in Cairo supported a pilot “Environmental Pioneers Program” to engage young people in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and finding solutions to global challenges such as climate change, biodiversity degradation, waste management and access to renewable energy. The project trained 70 Egyptian youth aged 18–30. In Yangon, Myanmar, the information centre supported OHCHR in organizing a Human Rights Day social media campaign consisting of a music video, four video clips and virtual portraits of human rights champions.

81. The United Nations information centre in Rio de Janeiro supported a virtual digital festival on the Sustainable Development Goals in August 2021 that consisted of 153 hours of activities, 43 webinars, 30 hours of workshops for teachers and 13 film screenings. The event garnered 13,000 subscriptions and was broadcast on Rede Amazônica to over 15,000 riverside teachers and on TV Claret to more than 20,000 students without Internet access.

82. The information centre in Manila and the resident coordinator office led the local communications group in organizing a three-day virtual discussion series in the framework of the United Nations Food Systems Summit in September 2021. The event, which included participants from national and local government, international financial institutions, donor governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations country team, attracted significant mainstream media attention. The discussion series also generated a Facebook reach of more than 150,000 people, the engagement of close to 10,000 reactions and some 60,000 views of the video.

83. During the period under review, the “Engagement Hub” – a repository of United Nations mobile apps, competitions, podcasts, awards and video games initiated and maintained by the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe – garnered more than 20 per cent of the Information Centre’s English-language webpage visits, or more than 160,000 visitors. The Centre also produced a climate version of its online “Go Goals” board game educating users about the impact of climate change on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

84. In Japan, the United Nations information centre played a significant role in raising awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals, including during the 2020 summer Olympic and Paralympic Games, which were held from July to September 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and through media campaigns on television. The number of Japanese media partners participating in the Sustainable Development Goals Media Compact stood at 137 at the end of 2021 – an increase of almost 100 during the year – with many of those partners conducting multi-year Sustainable Development Goals campaigns.

85. Following the creation of an African Sustainable Development book club in collaboration with the Sales and Marketing Section of the Department and other local publishing partners from across Africa, the information centre in Windhoek hosted four workshops in Arabic, English, French and Kiswahili to train African writers on educating children about the Sustainable Development Goals. In September 2021, in partnership with the European Union and ActNow, the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels organized a campaign entitled

“#EUBeachCleanup 2021”, which reached over 60 countries and involved more than 5,000 volunteers in clean-up efforts that collected over 7,000 kilograms of waste.

VII. Conclusion

86. In accordance with the United Nations global communications strategy, the Department of Global Communications has developed and implemented campaigns that engage its global audience on priority issues of the Organization. To that end, the Department has continued to expand its digital outreach on key themes such as the Sustainable Development Goals, climate action, racism and peacekeeping. Audience-specific content was increasingly communicated on digital platforms and in multiple languages by developing creative materials in line with user expectations. Partnerships with social media and technology companies supported substantial increases in reach and visibility, while media partnerships helped amplify messaging on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. United Nations information centres continued to be critical to adapting and implementing campaigns at the country level and in local languages, and cooperation with the resident coordinator system enabled the Department to engage with an even larger global audience.

87. In the light of the lessons learned from and the impact of the “Verified” campaign, the Department will continue to position United Nations content as a source for accurate, trusted information issued for the global public good and will expand its efforts to combat misinformation in other areas such as climate change and hate speech. In line with the vision articulated by the Secretary-General in his report entitled “Our Common Agenda”, the Department will lead the process of developing a global code of conduct that promotes integrity in public information.

88. The Department will also continue to lead on and support crisis communications responses at the country and global levels, including with regard to tackling misinformation and disinformation. As the United Nations system increasingly turns to the Department of Global Communications for leadership, coordination and guidance, the Department will strive to meet those demands by strengthening its capacity and expertise, including through wider and more effective partnerships for greater impact.