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Questions relating to information

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Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution [75/101 B](#), highlights activities of the Department of Global Communications undertaken from 1 February to 30 June 2021. The report focuses on the Department's global strategic communications response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and its multidimensional efforts to combat misinformation and foster international solidarity. In addition, the report reviews how the Department has supported the United Nations agenda on issues such as sustainable development, peace and security and human rights. It further details how the Department has continued to communicate effectively with the world to drive action for positive change for a world where everyone thrives in peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet.

* [A/76/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 132 of its resolution [75/101 B](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its forty-third session and to the Assembly at its seventy-sixth session on the activities of the Department of Global Communications and on the implementation of all recommendations and requests contained in that resolution. Accordingly, the Department submitted three reports ([A/AC.198/2021/2](#), [A/AC.198/2021/3](#) and [A/AC.198/2021/4](#)) for consideration by the Committee at its forty-third session, which was held from 27 April to 18 May 2021.

2. The present report contains updates to the information provided in those reports, including summaries of activities undertaken by the Department from 1 February to 30 June 2021 through its three subprogrammes: strategic communications services, news services and outreach and knowledge services.

3. The Department continues to prioritize multilingualism as a cornerstone of its work, from content production to campaigns and outreach, finding creative ways to reach as many people as possible through impactful storytelling and a focus on solutions, to engage and encourage them to act on issues on the United Nations agenda. Engaging young people, in particular with regards to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and taking climate action, remains a focus of those efforts. To reach global audiences regardless of where they fall along the digital divide, the Department continues to invest in both digital platforms and traditional media.

II. Global communications strategy for the United Nations

4. The global communications strategy for the United Nations employs an audience-focused approach for sharing the issues, why people should care about them and what they can do to make a difference. That approach positions the Organization as a conveyor of solutions and not merely as a herald of calamity. The strategy can be applied across the Secretariat and the United Nations system to generate awareness, empathy and support for all causes pertaining to the work of the Organization.

5. The global communications strategy includes suggested tactics for communicating around global and thematic issues and the steps to take for creating strategic communications campaigns, with monitoring and evaluation built into those steps. In 2021, the priority for United Nations communications has been the response to, and recovery from, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. As the world has begun a still-uneven movement towards building back better, the Department has also aimed to demonstrate multilateralism at work and the leading role of the United Nations in mobilizing for the planet; fighting inequality and standing for inclusion; and realizing gender equality. At the same time, the Department has continued to support the United Nations agenda on issues such as sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights.

6. In June 2021, as part of the roll-out and championing of the global communications strategy across the Organization, the Department issued to its staff and shared with the United Nations Communications Group a document entitled “UN communications strategy guide” and template, designed to structure United Nations communications at all levels, from global to country, as well as issue-specific campaigns. The communications strategy guide and template are meant to enhance the coherence and consistency of United Nations communications across different contexts and so maximize the impact of the Organization’s storytelling.

III. Combating a pandemic of misinformation and promoting action in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic

A. The Verified campaign

7. Launched by the Department in May 2020 in partnership with Purpose, a leading social mobilization organization, the Verified campaign is part of the United Nations COVID-19 communications response initiative designed to combat misinformation around the virus. Highlighting both the global health crisis proper and the ensuing socioeconomic crisis, the campaign encourages solidarity on the road to recovery with a focus on building back better within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. Verified invites members of the global public to come together to counter misinformation, including through specific global and local campaigns and by signing up to become “information volunteers” who receive a daily piece of United Nations content on the pandemic to share with their personal networks.

8. During the reporting period, the Verified campaign continued to counter misinformation related to COVID-19 and promote international cooperation and solidarity. The Department launched a new phase of the Verified campaign’s Pause initiative on 30 June that will end at the Global Media and Information Literacy Week, from 24 to 31 October 2021. The campaign focuses on making people pause before they share online content, and on fostering education and building awareness about how to pause, why it is important and how to stop misinformation. The launch of the latest Pause initiative received strong support from Member States and an array of partners.

9. The Verified initiative #OnlyTogether, which was launched on 11 March, highlighted that only by working together can the countries and peoples of the world overcome the crisis. Nearly 100 Member States were represented in the posting or re-posting of the initiative’s materials, including by Heads of State and Government, as well as celebrities.

10. United Nations information centres have been integral to the Verified campaign by providing insight on local and regional developments – especially misinformation trends – and helping shape the campaign strategy and content. Emphasis during the period under review lay on the #OnlyTogether initiative and promoting vaccine equity while reiterating the importance of preventative measures. Life-saving messages were also disseminated on social media channels and websites of United Nations country teams and their partners.

11. By collaborating with over 70 Portuguese-speaking artists, musicians, actors and influencers, the United Nations Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro reached 95 million people. The Information Centre in Cairo worked with media partners, such as Radio Masr and Al-Araby television, along with prominent local scientists and researchers who added their voices to the campaign. With translation support by the United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe in Brussels, the United Nations Information Service in Geneva and United Nations Information Centres in Asunción, Buenos Aires, Prague and Warsaw, large-scale advertising spaces in Europe and the Americas featured #OnlyTogether messages of hope while promoting vital health measures. The Information Centre in La Paz supported the initiative through the national #DosisdeEsperanza (“Dose of Hope”) social media campaign, while the Information Centre in Mexico City launched an Infodemia series together with Canal Catorce of the Public Broadcasting System of Mexico and the national news agency of Argentina.

B. Coordinating crisis communications

12. During the period under review, the Department continued to convene and co-chair a weekly meeting of the United Nations Communications Group to coordinate the communications efforts of the United Nations system on COVID-19 response. The Group, consisting of United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds and programmes, as well as regional commissions, discussed the most pressing issues related to COVID-19; shared a daily email with the latest information on United Nations efforts related to COVID-19; developed and updated United Nations system-wide messaging; and carried out forward planning.

C. United Nations information centres

13. As part of the Organization's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department has worked through its network of 59 United Nations information centres to strengthen its field communications capacity, holding regular bi-weekly webinars with field-based communications staff from across the United Nations system. Sessions included briefings by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other agencies for sharing experiences and best practices on crisis communications, along with messaging around the vaccine roll-out.

14. To elevate the skill base across United Nations information centres and resident coordinator offices, the Department organized webinars on social media, impact evaluation, creative writing and copy-editing. Increased collaboration via communication platforms and messaging technology strengthened networking between United Nations Headquarters and the field, as well as among field offices.

15. Working closely with resident coordinator offices as well as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WHO, United Nations information centres provided communications support to the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines under the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) international vaccine initiative by disseminating press releases, providing media monitoring and promoting COVAX shipments among local media and on their own websites and social media platforms, along with sending related inputs for the daily briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the United Nations Secretary-General.

16. United Nations information centres also supported resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams by compiling situation reports, promoting WHO guidance, disseminating and localizing information from the United Nations system, implementing outreach campaigns, responding to media queries and countering misinformation. For example, the United Nations Information Centre and Resident Coordinator Office in New Delhi, which launched, with contributions from other United Nations agencies, the #UNWithIndia social media campaign in English and Hindi to highlight United Nations support to India during the second wave of COVID-19, reached over 8 million people on digital platforms, in addition to millions more through local media interviews and news stories.

D. News and media

17. Available in all six official languages, the web portal for consolidated and practical information on the United Nations response to the pandemic features reports, statements and policy briefs of the Secretary-General; serves as a platform for the promotion of campaigns; and has a dedicated section with information for Member States. During the reporting period, the portal was regularly updated with the latest

information, news, articles, videos, speeches, event coverage and related documents and expanded to include a new section on vaccination for United Nations personnel.

18. Over 85 human-interest stories produced by United Nations information centres and resident coordinator offices featuring local heroes and United Nations frontline workers were published on the portal.

E. Promoting sustainable development

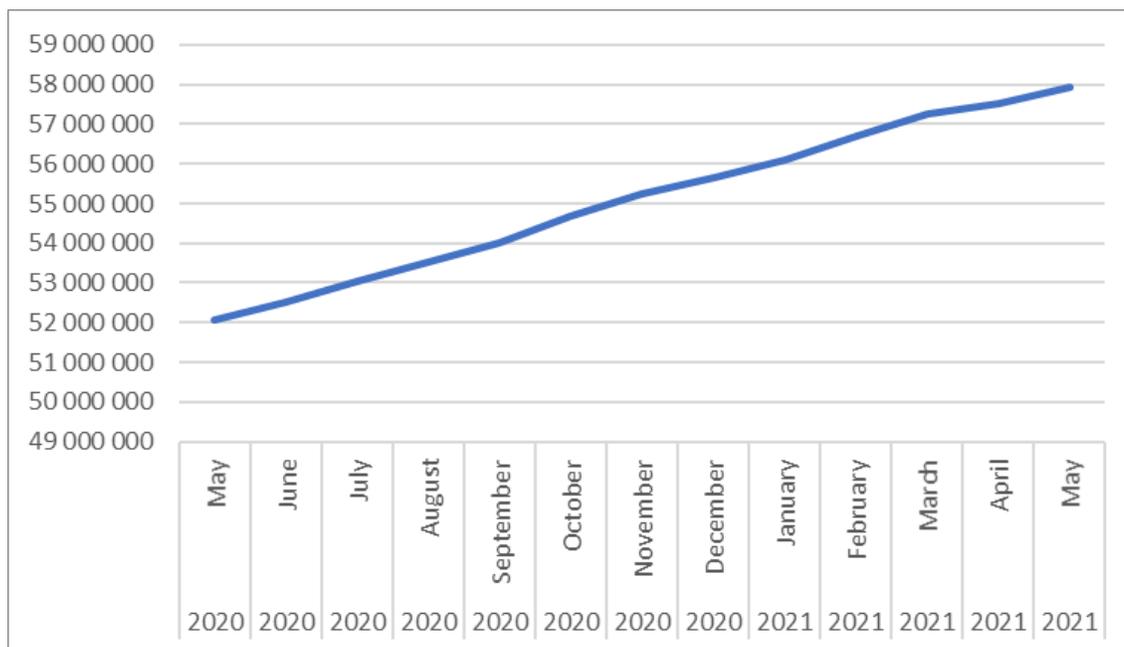
19. During the period under review, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to dominate communications around the Sustainable Development Goals. The Department supported and promoted the launch of several key reports highlighting the widely divergent recovery paths for developed and developing countries, especially least developed countries.

20. The updated “World economic situation and prospects as of mid-2021”, which showed that surging COVID-19 infections and inadequate vaccination progress in many countries threatened a broad-based world economic recovery, was covered by more than 1,000 articles in 50 countries, including through wire services such as Agencia Efe, the Associated Press, Reuters and Xinhua News Agency. The *World Social Report 2021: Reconsidering Rural Development*, which underscored improved connectivity, not urban migration, as the best way to support people in rural areas, garnered broad media coverage, including pickup by Antara News, Caribbean News Now, The Global Herald, Modern Diplomacy, the Saudi Gazette, the South Asia Monitor, Stabroek News and The Times of Africa. Members of the Sustainable Development Goals Media Compact that also covered the report included Ekoiq, Legit.ng, Scoop News and Sputnik News. The *Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2021* along with the 2021 Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development follow-up and the media briefing by the Economic and Social Council President on challenges and measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation were all widely covered in reports from ABC News, Agence France-Presse, the Associated Press, Bloomberg, Jerusalem Post, Reuters, United Press International and Xinhua News Agency, among others.

F. Social media

21. Managing accounts with 57 million followers, the Social Media Section of the Department created and featured social-optimized content to combat COVID-19 and vaccine misinformation in all official languages as well as Hindi, Kiswahili and Portuguese. Messaging particularly addressed the need for global solidarity and recovering better. Partnerships with social media platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok and Twitter, highlighted the relevance of the Organization in the face of global challenges and brought extensive support for United Nations efforts to address misinformation owing to increased reach and engagement among social media users worldwide (see figure I). The Department also worked with United Nations system entities to help improve and ensure implementation of the policies of major social media platforms, especially in relation to vaccine misinformation.

Figure I
Growth of all corporate United Nations social media accounts, May 2020–May 2021



G. Messengers of Peace

22. The Department continued to benefit from the support of United Nations Messengers of Peace, Goodwill Ambassadors and other advocates and influencers who amplified messaging from across the United Nations system, particularly with regard to COVID-19 and climate action. This included the #OnlyTogether campaign in March and a campaign for the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace (6 April) that highlighted the contributions of sport and physical activity to building back better.

H. United Nations Academic Impact initiative

23. Through the United Nations Academic Impact initiative, the Department held dialogues with educators, researchers and students worldwide to discuss the role of academic cooperation in addressing issues of global concern, with the participation of over 4,000 individuals from more than 60 countries, including a webinar that highlighted ongoing challenges and new perspectives of multilateral diplomacy in the context of COVID-19.

I. Visitors' services

24. In Geneva, Nairobi, New York and Vienna, visitors' services continued to offer a range of virtual programmes to a global audience. All duty stations highlighted the United Nations COVID-19 pandemic response and encouraged virtual visitors to join the Verified campaign. More than 8,000 people took part in at least one virtual session conducted by the Visitors' Service in New York, including Inter Campus (the educational branch of football club Inter Milan), international Model United Nations groups, Riga Young Leaders School and WeCare China 2021, as well as schools from

Bolivia, Pakistan and South Korea. Virtual programmes in Nairobi and Vienna reached several hundred and close to 3,000 visitors, respectively. In-person tours for high-level dignitaries and protocol tours continued in Geneva, even as virtual programming was also developed. In New York, the Visitors' Service also created thematic virtual tours on Black history, United Nations architecture, women and Asia and the Pacific. In response to the challenges of homeschooling and virtual learning, the Service also offered webinars for educators focusing on peace and security, human rights and sustainable development.

J. Sales and marketing

25. During the reporting period, United Nations Publications continued to showcase on its website (shop.un.org) and the United Nations iLibrary content from the United Nations Secretariat and United Nations agencies, funds, programmes, institutes and entities on a variety of subjects related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

K. Exhibits

26. The Department maintained its focus on producing online exhibitions in connection with United Nations observances. The seven exhibits published between February and June 2021 on issues including human rights during the COVID-19 pandemic, indigenous peoples, and plastics pollution garnered over 45,000 views.

L. Civil society

27. The Department continued to engage civil society stakeholders through virtual events that amplified key United Nations themes, campaigns and messages, including two virtual events on COVID-19, vaccine equity and lessons learned that reached a total of more than 6,000 viewers. Overall, the social media engagement and reach of the Civil Society Unit increased by 30 per cent across all platforms (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter).

M. UN Chronicle

28. Of the 27 articles published by the *UN Chronicle* during the period under review, some one third concerned the COVID-19 pandemic. The *UN Chronicle* also published a photo essay by photographer Nicholas Vreeland depicting life in the village of Mundgod, India, during the early days of the pandemic.

N. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

29. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued to support United Nations efforts to counter COVID-19 misinformation. At three virtual information sessions held during the reporting period attended by over 400 participants – including delegates, United Nations depository librarians and staff from United Nations Secretariat libraries – information experts discussed the role of libraries in curbing misinformation.

IV. Multilingualism

A. United Nations information centres

30. The global network of United Nations information centres operates daily in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, as well as in 125 additional languages.¹ Reaching audiences in their own language is a core aspect of the work of the information centres, as they create traditional and social media content and conduct radio and television interviews, talk shows and press briefings in those languages, in addition to Braille and Nepali and Hindi sign languages.

31. United Nations information centres play a key role in translating and adapting global messages and campaigns. Their multilingual content is shared digitally across websites and social media platforms, 35 of 58 information centres post content on their websites in local languages and another 24 languages are used locally across social media platforms, such as Aparat, Flickr, Flipboard, LinkedIn, Livestream, Periscope, Pinterest, SlideShare, Snapchat, Telegram, TikTok, Tumblr, Vimeo, Vine and VK.

32. During the period under review, the network of information centres strengthened cooperation with other United Nations system entities at the country level to enhance the impact and coherence of their communications. This included working through United Nations Communication Groups chaired or supported by the centres in their respective countries or regions to promote United Nations priorities to the media and general public. While providing guidance and support across the entire resident coordinator system, the centres provided more direct support in the 44 countries in which they have been integrated with the resident coordinator offices.

33. To reach wider audiences, United Nations information centres have also partnered with external organizations and influencers. For example, the United Nations Information Centre in Beirut joined with Lebanese-born singer Tania Kassis to release a song recorded by the Kiev Philharmonic Orchestra, entitled “Land for all” which promotes the humanitarian values of combating violence and war, eradicating poverty and helping the most vulnerable.

B. Multimedia and multilingual news and features

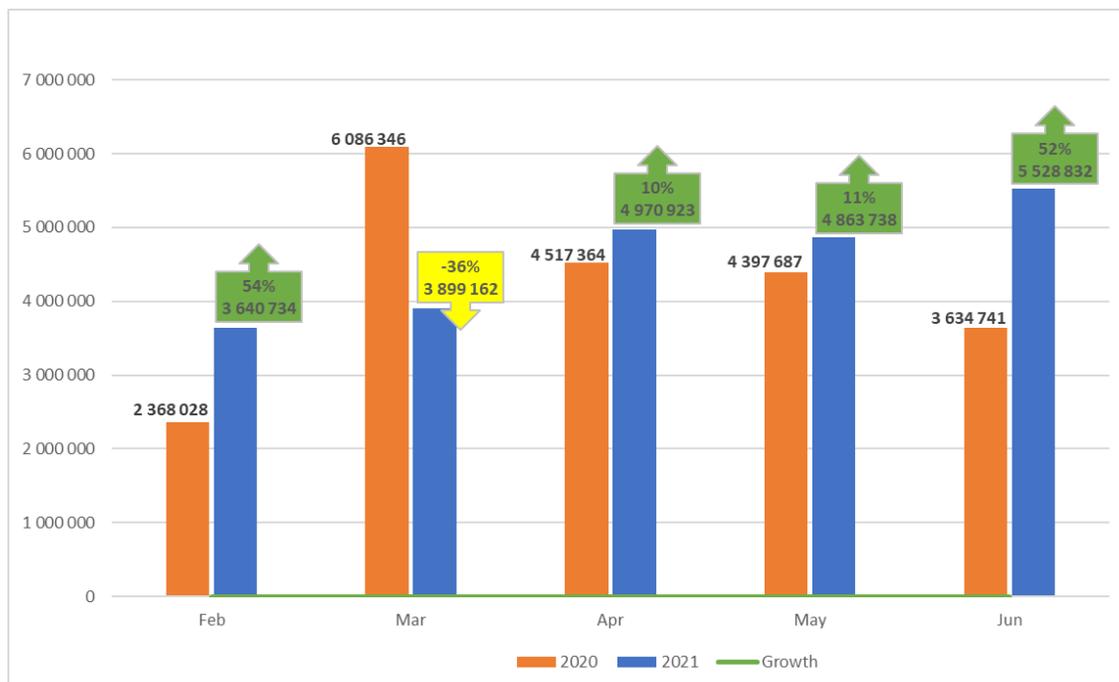
34. As the world grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department’s multilingual United Nations News served as a one-stop shop for timely, fact-based and useful information. The growth of users since the onset of the pandemic held steady into 2021, showing United Nations News to be a source of accurate and credible information (see figure II). Pageviews (see figure III for breakdown by language) also continued to grow even beyond the high numbers registered at the start

¹ Afrikaans, Akuapem Twi, Armenian, Asante Twi, Awá, Azerbaijani, Bahasa Indonesia, Bafut, Bambara, Bangla/Bengali, Bangwa, Bari, Basaa, Belarusian, Bemba, Bhojpuri, Burmese, Chakma, Chechen, Czech, Dagaare, Dagbani, Dangbe, Danish, Dioula, Dutch, Emberá, Ewe, Ewondo, Fante, Filipino, Finnish, Frisian (Frysk), Ffulde, Ga, Georgian, German, Gonja, Greek, Guahibo, Guarani, Gujarati, Gulmacema, Hausa, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hitnù, Hungarian, Icelandic, Idoma, Igbo, Ijaw, Ika, Inga, Italian, Japanese, Kanuri, Kaonde, Karakalpak, Kazakh, Kikuyu, Kiswahili, Kituba, Korewahe, Lenje, Lingala, Lozi, Lunda, Luvale, Maithili, Malagasy, Māori, Marathi, Mari, Misak, Moore, Muyscubun, Nasa Yuwe, Ndebele, Nepali, Newari, Norwegian, Nyanja/Chinyanja, Nzema, Pede, Persian, Pidgin English, Polish, Portuguese, Quechua, Sáliba, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, Shona, Shupamum, Sikuaní, Sinhala, Siswati, Slovak, Slovene, Swedish, Tamang, Tamazight, Tamil, Telugu, Tharu, Ticuna, Tiv, Tonga, Tsonga, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek, Venda, Wayuunaiki, Wolof, Xhosa, Yakut, Yoruba, Yukpa, Zenú and Zulu.

of the pandemic, with some 30 million pageviews for the reporting period compared to 27 million over the same time frame last year. United Nations News also proved increasingly attractive to younger audiences in the 18 to 24 demographic range.

Figure II

Growth in United Nations News users, February–June 2020 and February–June 2021



35. The content of United Nations News in Arabic continued to be widely picked up by regional media, while its Twitter reach registered a 100 per cent jump between February and March 2021. Features included a multimedia interview of a WHO epidemiologist on vaccines, variants and safe travel, and a multimedia special on the Head of the Social Affairs Sector at the League of Arab States that was produced for the launch of the Arab Women Mediators Network. Another feature on a Lebanese scientist, professor of epidemiology at the American University of Beirut and L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science laureate, Abla El Sebaei, was retweeted by the influential Lebanese singer Elissa.

36. Impactful stories and interviews on critical United Nations issues remained the focus of United Nations News in Chinese. Looking ahead to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2021, the Chinese Unit produced a climate action series that generated audience interest across platforms. The United Nations News in Chinese interview of a biologist at Princeton University, Yan Ning, on access to and participation in science by women and girls on the occasion of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science (11 February) drew more than 2 million readers on the Weibo account maintained by the Unit.

37. United Nations News in English highlighted the ways in which the United Nations system has helped communities overcome the ravages of COVID-19. Through its “United Nations Resident Coordinator” blog series and “First Person” series, United Nations News in English showed the efficacy of partnerships in conveying solutions to crises sparked by the pandemic. Further collaboration with United Nations information centres and country teams included a podcast on gender empowerment in the South Pacific: “Island Voices”, and another featuring Holocaust

survivors: “In Their Words: Surviving the Holocaust. Finding Hope”. For most of the reporting period, daily pageviews exceeded 70,000 – some 115 per cent more than the pre-pandemic figure.

38. Audience traffic to United Nations News in French remained strong, with 1.70 million pageviews during the reporting period compared to 1.71 million pageviews in the same time frame in 2020. The most-read articles concerned health and climate. Among the most popular was coverage of WHO vaccine guidance. United Nations News in French social media continued to engage audiences and influencers, including government officials, diplomats and journalists. To reach new francophone audiences in Africa, the team strengthened collaboration with United Nations information centres, working with centres in Benin, Madagascar and Senegal to cover the COVAX initiative roll-out.

39. As United Nations News in Hindi added media partners, pageviews registered 27 per cent growth while users grew by 49 per cent compared to the same period last year. User acquisition through online search increased by 87 per cent. The Hindi Unit produced explainers on the COVAX initiative and challenges of the vaccination campaign, as well as multimedia content on climate change, including a feature on tackling water waste in the fashion industry.

40. United Nations News in Kiswahili continued to tailor content to audiences and platforms in the East Africa region, sharing its features and daily television news programme with regional media partners and posting content on its YouTube channel. The Unit added 14 partners from traditional radio stations, mainstream television stations and online broadcasters, including Hooza Media in Rwanda. The Kiswahili Unit also launched a mobile-phone-friendly version of its radio programmes for access in Burundi, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. With partners rebroadcasting its content, United Nations News in Kiswahili daily news programmes reached millions – as much as 60 per cent of the listening and viewing audience – across East and Southern Africa.

41. United Nations News in Portuguese registered a record 1.9 million pageviews and over 940,000 unique users in the period under review – an increase of 25 per cent over the same time frame last year. Its interview with the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa was featured on the cover of the major Angolan newspaper *O País*, in *Exame* in Mozambique and on Radio France Internationale. Through cooperation with United Nations country teams and peacekeeping missions, the Portuguese Unit produced a steady stream of field material. A special report for International Women’s Day in March featured female health ministers and health workers from Angola, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Timor-Leste working to combat COVID-19.

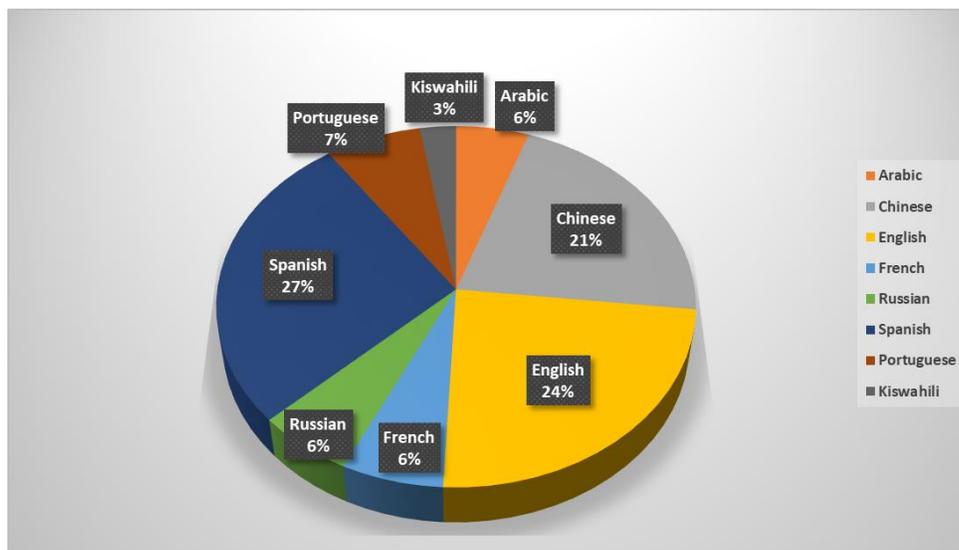
42. United Nations News in Russian registered increases of more than 150 per cent in both pageviews and users during the reporting period compared to the same time frame in 2020. Its coverage of science and messages of solidarity helped address misinformation circulating in Russian-language media, including social media, in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. To spotlight women’s empowerment, United Nations News in Russian interviewed female peacekeepers from Russia and Ukraine, as well as celebrity activists, including United Nations Population Fund Goodwill Ambassador, the model Natalia Vodyanova, and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Goodwill Ambassador, singer Manizha.

43. During the period under review, United Nations News in Spanish registered 7.37 million pageviews and 4.5 million users, displaying robust growth of 504 per cent compared to before the pandemic. The Spanish Unit regularly live-tweeted press conferences by WHO and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and those posts were frequently retweeted by physicians, other media outlets and influencers.

Working with United Nations information centres in Latin America, United Nations News in Spanish delivered stories featuring local voices and on-the-ground experiences.

Figure III

United Nations News pageviews by language, February–June 2021



C. *UN Chronicle*

44. The *UN Chronicle* published approximately one third of its 68 articles from 2020 in all six official languages and all 27 of the 2021 articles that have appeared in the period under review in Chinese and English. Translation of those articles into the four other official languages is underway.

V. Youth engagement

A. Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth

45. The Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, hosted by the Department, continued to engage young people and to advocate both within and outside the United Nations system for their involvement in United Nations processes and initiatives, as well as for their place in priorities outlined in the United Nations Youth Strategy, including mental health, climate change and preventing violent extremism.

46. In addition to supporting the Verified and ActNow campaigns, the Office initiated a range of campaigns during the reporting period. Those included supporting the selection process for the 400 young delegates to the “Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition” event organized by the Government of Italy and to be held in September 2021 ahead of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in November 2021; launching the “Fearless Future” campaign in partnership with the United Nations Free and Equal campaign to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia to highlight the leadership of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) youth around the world; launching a global campaign with the United Network of Young Peacebuilders to amplify testimony from young people

included in the first *Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Space*; launching the Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines *With Us and For Us: Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises*; and launching, together with the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a call to action on the political participation of young women.

47. The tenth anniversary of the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum – co-organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth, in collaboration with the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development – took place on 7 and 8 April under the theme “A decade of action: Building a resilient recovery”. The Youth Forum 2021 brought together over 19,000 young people virtually in what became the largest gathering of youth that the United Nations had ever seen. The event featured the launch of the *Youth2030 Progress Report 2021* – a first review of progress in the United Nations system-wide youth strategy that highlights how the Organization is responding to the needs of young people in the COVID-19 crisis and working with Governments and youth to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

B. Peace and security

48. The Department worked with the Department of Peace Operations and peacekeeping missions to promote the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers (29 May) under the theme “The road to a lasting peace: leveraging the power of youth for peace and security”, highlighting the importance of young peacekeepers and increased engagement of youth to help build sustainable peace. Several United Nations information centres collaborated with peacekeeping operations to hold virtual interactions between youth in troop and police contributing countries and young peacekeepers from those countries deployed abroad. Outreach to media in troop and police contributing countries with Dag Hammarskjöld medal recipients resulted in over 100 articles published in print and online in major media outlets in troop and police contributing countries. The United Nations information centre network also helped facilitate 32 placements of an op-ed by the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations in 19 countries in eight languages.

VI. Strategic communications services

A. United Nations information centres

49. During the period under review, the Department intensified its communications reach through capacity development of its information centres and in close cooperation with resident coordinator office communications staff. Guided by the United Nations Global Communications Strategy, the Department provided specific strategic and crisis communications support to resident coordinators and made such support available to all 131 United Nations country teams. Support ranged from direct engagement to communications guidance and coordinating regional communities of practice. The United Nations Information Centre in Dakar, for example, supported a network of United Nations communications officers in francophone Africa, developing communications strategies and promoting campaigns relevant to the region; while the information centres in Canberra and Port of Spain provided communications outreach and logistical support to United Nations country teams in their respective regions of Australia and the South Pacific and the Caribbean. Those activities enabled the Department to extend its support to resident coordinator offices and United Nations country teams in countries without a United Nations information centre presence.

50. A joint review conducted in March–April 2021 by the Department and the Development Coordination Office of the integration of United Nations information centres with resident coordinator offices in 44 locations revealed that the integration could result in a robust communications capacity and in the majority of cases had already led to a significant change in planning and implementing communications in the country.

B. Human rights

51. The International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda (7 April), organized by the Department in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Rwanda, was marked by a virtual commemoration broadcast on United Nations Web TV and United Nations channels on Facebook and YouTube. Featuring remarks by the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda and testimony from a child survivor, and moderated by the Under-Secretary-General of the Department, the event was viewed by an international audience of more than 10,000 people. The commemoration was amplified via multilingual social media messaging on United Nations accounts. Hashtag mentions and engagement increased by 211 per cent (1,200,000 versus 386,000) and 18 per cent (65,100 versus 55,100), respectively, over the previous year.

C. Peace and security

52. In June, the Department in further partnership with the Department of Peace Operations launched the third phase of the “Service and Sacrifice” campaign thanking troop and police contributing countries for their invaluable contributions to peacekeeping.

53. In February and June, the Department, together with the Departments of Operational Support, Peacekeeping Operations and Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, facilitated training workshops on communicating on sexual exploitation and abuse. The Department also continued to ensure that the external and internal United Nations web platforms contained the latest information on the Organization’s efforts to address sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel.

D. New Partnership for Africa’s Development

54. During the reporting period, the *Africa Renewal* website spotlighted ongoing efforts on the continent to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic through interviews, such as the one with the Director of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, along with content on Africa’s quest for vaccines and the arrival of the COVAX initiative vaccines. The Department also launched an interview series profiling the work of female African Permanent Representatives to the United Nations.

55. Overall, *Africa Renewal* produced 105 articles that were republished by 175 media outlets in 30 countries, including Burkina Faso, Eritrea, France, the Gambia, Lebanon, Namibia, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, the United States and Zimbabwe.

E. Climate action

56. Climate action remained a priority for United Nations communications in the lead-up to the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, driving traditional and social

media coverage supported by extensive multilingual digital content amplifying the calls to action by the Secretary-General.

57. International Mother Earth Day (22 April) and the Leaders' Climate Summit convened by the United States that month garnered strong media and influencer engagement. An op-ed by the Secretary-General on International Mother Earth Day calling for more ambitious climate action was placed in 144 outlets in 20 languages in 58 countries, while his corresponding Reuters interview generated substantial reprints and tweets across regions. Remarks by the Secretary-General at the launch of the World Meteorological Organization report *State of the Global Climate 2020* and at the Leaders' Climate Summit were widely covered, including by Agence France-Presse, Agencia Efe, Asharq Al-Awsat, Euronews, The Guardian, The Hindu, O Globo and Reuters. Social media coverage of International Mother Earth Day and the fifth anniversary of the signing of the Paris Agreement was amplified by 22 United Nations Messengers of Peace, Goodwill Ambassadors and Sustainable Development Goals Advocates promoting United Nations messages and the calls to action by the Secretary-General, including Antonio Banderas, Paulo Coelho, Leonardo DiCaprio, Jane Goodall, Dia Mirza, Edward Norton and Shakira.

58. The United Nations climate action website, which attracted over 100,000 pageviews a month during the reporting period, promoted the remarks of the Secretary-General welcoming back the United States to the Paris Agreement and his "red alert" in response to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change synthesis report on *Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement* in February; his call to end the "deadly addiction" to coal in a speech to the Powering Past Coal Alliance in March; his push for greater climate financing and a phase-out of coal at the twelfth Petersberg Climate Dialogue in May; and his address on climate finance at the Group of Seven summit in June. The website also featured new in-depth content in multiple languages, including interviews with United Nations thought leaders, an overview of climate finance, stories showcasing climate solutions and dedicated tracking of the coalition of countries committed to net-zero emissions by 2050.

59. The United Nations campaign for individual climate action, ActNow, continued to gain momentum, with some 1.5 million actions logged through the mobile app and chat bot between February and June 2021. The version of ActNow for children, Climate Action Superheroes, was made available in French and Spanish.

60. As the Organization looked to increase climate ambition and global action, United Nations information centres introduced diverse initiatives in the lead-up to the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The United Nations Information Centre in Lagos and the United Nations country team, in collaboration with the youth organization Solution 17 for Climate Change, launched the Naija Climate Now Campaign for youth, students, scientists and entrepreneurs to design and implement sustainable solutions to mitigate climate change. Information Centres in New Delhi, Pretoria and Rio de Janeiro also launched national climate action campaigns in June 2021.

61. The Department continued to promote the urgency of climate action across all social media platforms in nine languages (the six official languages plus Hindi, Kiswahili and Portuguese). Highlights included content created for International Mother Earth Day featuring young climate activists as well as on net-zero greenhouse gas emissions; the launch of a video series on the Paris Agreement that registered over one million views; and the Climate Action Superheroes and other ActNow campaign assets. Climate messaging and content performed consistently above average across social media platforms.

VII. Outreach and advocacy

A. Creative community outreach

62. During the period under review, the Department collaborated with photographer and Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Louie Psihoyos towards producing a major cinematic installation on the United Nations Secretariat building to promote climate action at the nexus of poverty and inequality eradication in advance of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

B. Education outreach

63. The Department organized various educational outreach activities, including online discussions and film screenings, to highlight the Organization's priorities for 2020–2021. In total, a global audience of over 80,000 participated in those activities. Support was provided to the Office of the President of the General Assembly on the observance of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade (25 March). The Department also launched a podcast series featuring Holocaust survivors and further coordinated the development of support materials for Model United Nations students and regularly briefed students about the work of the Organization.

C. United Nations Academic Impact initiative

64. A United Nations Academic Impact initiative webinar focused on the crosscutting impacts of racism and the role of universities in promoting racial diversity and inclusion. In observance of World Refugee Day (20 June), the initiative organized a webinar with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on contributions by universities to inclusive and equitable quality education for displaced students and scholars.

D. Visitors' services

65. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalism Fellowship, expected to take place between September and October 2021, is projected to be fully virtual. Fellows will benefit from trainings with and briefings from United Nations experts, exclusive access to top United Nations officials and networking opportunities with a global group of journalists and broadcasters.

E. Civil Society Unit and Non-Governmental Liaison Service

66. In an effort to reach new audiences, encourage participation of civil society and highlight a key organizational priority, the Department spearheaded the digital initiative known as "Civil Society Climate Action Stories", highlighting civil society climate action around the world. Some 140 action reports were received from different regions and their content was disseminated through various social media platforms.

67. The Department continued to engage civil society through virtual events amplifying key United Nations themes, campaigns and messaging on World Press Freedom Day (3 May) and on sustainability and food systems, as well as ecosystem restoration.

68. From February to June, the Non-Governmental Liaison Service supported the participation of around 900 civil society entities in United Nations high-level meetings and summits, including some 30 civil society representatives who spoke on COVID-19 response and recovery.

F. Sales and marketing

69. Engaging with some 600 publishing industry leaders, sales and marketing staff spoke at five high-level publishing industry and librarian conferences about the Sustainable Development Goals, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

G. Yearbook of the United Nations

70. After publishing the revised edition of the UN75 commemorative book *Achieving our common humanity: Celebrating global cooperation through the United Nations* in February, the Department resumed its regular production of the *Yearbook of the United Nations* and associated activities, including using Yearbook collection content on the Yearbook social media platform to support United Nations system-wide communications priorities and the United Nations Global Communications Strategy.

H. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

71. During the reporting period, the Dag Hammarskjöld Library continued its work in developing a knowledge commons for the United Nations pertaining to both digital information management and the re-use of Library spaces and assets. More than three million United Nations documents and publications in six official languages were downloaded by researchers from more than 8,000 cities worldwide. Partners included the United Nations libraries in Bangkok, Beirut, Geneva and Vienna. The Library analysed and made available online some 4,344 United Nations documents and publications, especially on the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change and COVID-19. The *Index to Proceedings of the Economic and Social Council (2020 session)* and the *Index to Proceedings of the General Assembly (74th session)* were completed and made available on the Library website. In addition, the Library updated access and retrieval information for searching and discovering speeches delivered at the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and the Economic and Social Council on the topic of decolonization.

72. The Library continued to digitize important historic United Nations documents and maps in order to make them available online. During the period under review, 17 peacekeeping maps and 15,550 parliamentary documents (representing some 82,900 pages) in all six official languages were digitized, including documents from the Fourth Committee and the Trusteeship Council.

VIII. News and media

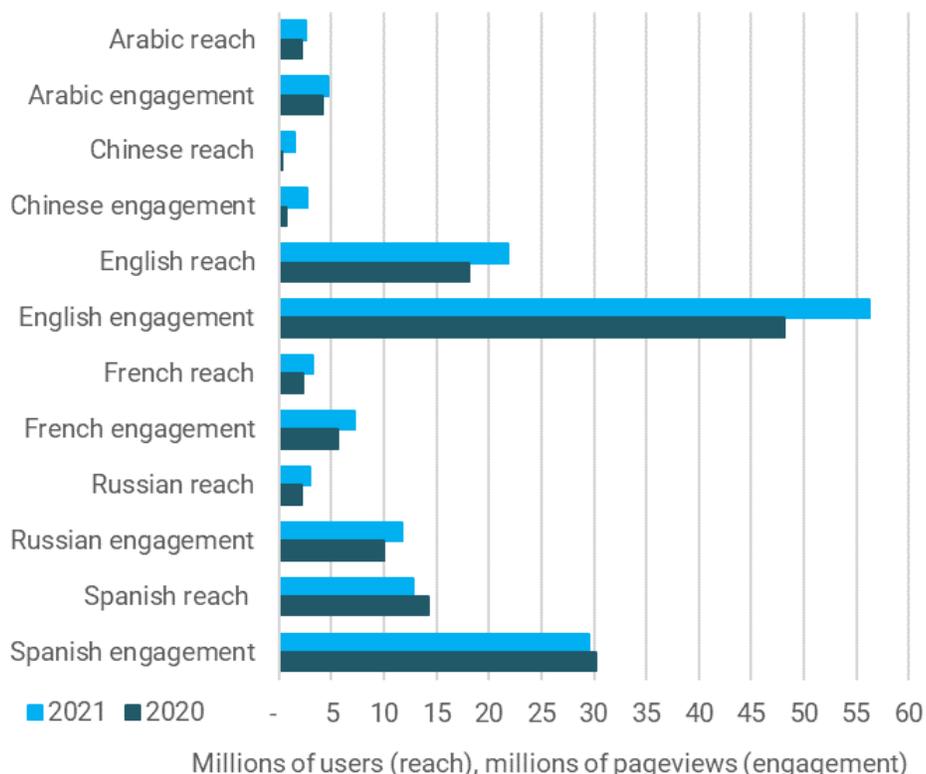
A. Web and digital

73. During the period under review, 44.7 million users visited the United Nations main website, which registered 112 million pageviews across all languages. That represented growth in reach of 5.6 million users (an increase of 14.3 per cent), and

growth in measured engagement of 13.2 million pageviews (an increase of 13.3 per cent) in comparison to the same time frame last year (see figure IV).

Figure IV

United Nations website users and pageviews by language, February–June 2020 and 2021



74. Audience engagement also increased in all languages between February and May 2020 compared to 2019, and by the largest increment during this period than in any of the previous five years. Total pageviews in all languages numbered 94.8 million, an increase of 50 per cent over the same period last year. The largest increases were in Spanish (11 million), English (9 million) and Russian (6 million) (see figure V).

75. The Department continued to use the United Nations website to promote key communications campaigns, such as the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers and climate action, among others. Since 2019, views of the home page have averaged around 3.5 million a year.

76. During the reporting period, the Web Services Section provided further guidance to United Nations Secretariat entities on standards for website accessibility and branding. More than 20 new websites from across the Secretariat were reviewed for accessibility and branding compliance prior to their launch. In addition, the accessibility guidelines for United Nations websites were revised to include the latest industry standard guidance.

77. Work to refresh and migrate United Nations website legacy content to the main content management system was completed in all official languages. Related redesigning and web standards compliance assurance were conducted for such core

United Nations webpages as About Us, Our Work, Global Issues and United Nations Observances.

78. The Department has also been developing digital materials for the twentieth anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action on countering racism, intolerance and discrimination, including developing a website for the campaign “#FightRacism”. The United Nations website also continued to promote the podcast “Awake at Night” hosted by the Under-Secretary-General of the Department, which achieved over 2 million downloads during the period from July 2020 to April 2021.

B. Press and meetings coverage

79. During the reporting period, the Meetings Coverage Section published 1,287 press releases in English and French – a total of 5,792 pages – covering activities of the Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, Security Council, General Assembly plenaries and committees, the Economic and Social Council, and daily briefings by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General. Given COVID-19 restrictions, the Section produced press releases on both virtual and in-person public sessions.

80. The Meetings Coverage Section website, in English and French, registered a 47 per cent increase in pageviews and an 83 per cent increase in new users compared to the same time frame in 2020, representing a global audience of 240 countries and territories. During the period under review, the website saw a four-fold increase of users from Asia.

81. The Department worked with the office of the President of the General Assembly to set up a portal to facilitate remote work with Member States and to ensure that information could be shared in a timely manner and that General Assembly resolutions and decisions could be adopted under the silence procedure.

82. The Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit continued to inform the media about virtual meetings, events and briefings. It also liaised with members of the press when in-person meetings, stakeouts and press briefings took place. The Unit remained in contact with the United Nations Correspondents Association on matters of access and working conditions.

C. Webcast, video, television and photo

83. During the reporting period, viewers from 235 countries and territories watched live and on-demand streaming coverage of United Nations meetings and events directly from the United Nations Web TV website and the United Nations channels on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, generating over 52 million views. The United Nations YouTube channel reached the mark of 1,125,000 subscribers. Overall audiences increased 62 per cent across all streaming platforms compared to the same time frame in 2020.

84. The redesigned multilingual United Nations Web TV website – launched in English in June 2021 with other official language versions planned to follow – employs the latest streaming media technology and a new cloud video platform offering better video quality, performance and searchability.

85. The UNifeed news video service delivered timely broadcast-quality video news packages from United Nations Headquarters as well as from peacekeeping missions and more than 30 partner agencies, funds and programmes. Broadcast airtime of UNifeed content broke records in May with 20,298 hits or times aired (figure V).

UNifeed footage was aired by broadcasters around the world more than 80,000 times from January to June 2021.

Figure V

Unifeed monthly comparisons, February–June 2020 and February–June 2021



86. The Video Section provided timely coverage of major United Nations events on combatting COVID-19 misinformation, in addition to covering stories on the effectiveness of vaccines, the COVAX vaccine initiative and vaccine equity. The Section produced motion graphic and data visualization explainer videos on vaccine roll-outs, personal protection equipment and essential services to address the pandemic in developing countries. Conveying the message that no country is safe until all are, the videos highlighted the work of United Nations country teams and interagency cooperation in delivering life-saving supplies.

87. In April, the Section launched “Within our grasp”, a series of climate videos narrated by young environmentalists and activists from around the world presenting a vision of how, guided by the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, we can create a world free from the effects of climate change. The first episode, featuring actor and United Nations Environment Programme Goodwill Ambassador Aidan Gallagher, garnered more than 2.7 million interactions.

88. The Video Section is also coordinating a series of productions related to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action focused on racial discrimination and the legacy of the slave trade and fostering tolerance and social integration.

89. Working with broadcast partners, United Nations TV facilitated coverage of more than 100 hybrid and virtual United Nations meetings and events. It also covered the restart of on-site live meetings of the Security Council and General Assembly as well as other meetings and events, along with daily press briefings. United Nations TV used its studios to connect the Secretary-General in live interviews with the BBC, CBS, CNN and other networks and provided production and graphic support to virtual and hybrid productions. The United Nations TV channels on YouTube and Spectrum

cable presented 24/7 live and virtual events, along with nightly highlights of the day and stories from the field, such as on the COVAX initiative featuring videos and interviews from UNICEF and other United Nations agencies.

90. During the period under review, the United Nations Audiovisual Library fulfilled 2,160 direct requests for footage for use in the production of daily news stories, documentaries, online productions and educational programmes by a range of clients, including diplomatic missions, media, educational and cultural institutions, independent producers, and United Nations offices. The Audiovisual Library website received 263,904 pageviews and some 10,000 video views. Almost 71,500 audio and video files were downloaded from the website. With the support of the Government of Oman, the Audiovisual Library continued to digitize selected historical audiovisual archives. The project has digitized approximately 60 per cent of the eligible historical collection.

91. The United Nations Photo website registered some 347,000 pageviews on its revamped website. A total of 111,565 high-resolution photos were downloaded from the website. Following the implementation of the new United Nations Photo asset management system, the website registered a 45 per cent increase in downloads. Some 600 photos were captioned and had their metadata enhanced for more accurate search results and effective discovery on the Internet. The United Nations Photo Library fulfilled 1,750 direct requests from international media, publishers, filmmakers, permanent missions and educational and cultural institutions, as well as United Nations offices. Photos from the United Nations collection were used around the world for exhibits, online multimedia projects, social media, presentations and research projects.

D. Partners

92. As part of the efforts of the Department to reach audiences via traditional media, the Partnerships Unit concluded content licensing agreements with Silverbird Television and Great Audacity Studio – two Nigeria-based broadcasters planning to add the short-film series UN in Action to their programming.

93. To expand its reach to audiences without Internet access, the Department is working with Libraries Without Borders, a non-profit organization that serves communities around the world with pop-up information centres providing offline access to high-quality multimedia content. The partner aims to include the UN in Action series and United Nations News multilingual content in its offerings.

94. Other licensing agreements were secured during the reporting period with the stream publisher Alexander Street to make UN in Action available to schools, universities and libraries; with the India-based news aggregator Dailyhunt to feature United Nations News content in Hindi on its mobile app; and with the online news platform serving journalists TheNewsMarket to include United Nations News and UNifeed content.

IX. Expo2020

95. After being postponed by a year owing to the pandemic, Expo2020 is scheduled to take place from 1 October 2021 to 31 March 2022. In consideration of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations has shifted its participation from a dedicated pavilion to programming and activities for United Nations Day, key international days and thematic weeks that champion multilateralism and international cooperation, as well as amplify the Sustainable Development Goals in

coordination with partners and Member States in their national pavilions. Expo 2020 has also offered the United Nations access to the Opportunity Pavilion curated and managed by Expo and focused on the Sustainable Development Goals.

X. Conclusions

96. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided the Department an opportunity to effectively implement the Global Communications Strategy that was rolled out just before the pandemic began. The strategy represents a new approach to United Nations communications – one that goes beyond merely raising awareness about United Nations activities to inspiring people to care about what the Organization is doing and mobilizing them to take supportive action. In the midst of the current extraordinary global situation, the successes of the Department show that the strategy is bearing fruit. Looking ahead, the Department will continue to apply the strategy to strengthen support for the work and purposes of the United Nations by serving as a trusted source of information on major issues and engaging a wide array of stakeholders at all levels across platforms and languages.
