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Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: proposed programme budget for 2022

(Item 3 (a))

Programme 24

Global communications

1. During its sixty-first session, the Committee considered programme 24, Global communications, of the proposed programme plan for 2022 and programme performance information for 2020 ([A/76/6 \(Sect. 28\)](#)).
2. The Chair drew attention to the statement of the Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications introducing the programme. The Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications responded to questions raised by the Committee during its consideration of the programme.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed support for the work of the programme and the efforts made to raise awareness of the work of the United Nations and promote the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Appreciation was expressed for the quality of the programme plan, which was considered to be very easy to read and comprehend.
4. Delegations commended the Department of Global Communications for its swift and quality response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including its creativity in reformatting all information and communication activities of the United Nations in the light of the new global challenge, to combat disinformation and misinformation and promote the world's knowledge and awareness about the pandemic. A delegation noted that that communications approach could be similarly applied to other important areas, such as the Sustainable



Development Goals, the women and peace and security agenda and climate change. Another delegation highlighted that, despite the negative impact of the pandemic, the changing reality had made the Department expand its professional toolkit, add innovative forms of presentation of materials and engage with the audience. A number of delegations welcomed the Department's global thematic campaigns, including "Verified", "Pledge to Pause" and "Only Together", designed to counter disinformation and misinformation regarding COVID-19, as well as promote science-based trusted content, access to vaccination and freedom of opinion, expression and the press. Delegations acknowledged the inclusion of those campaigns in the programme plan for 2022, as it sent a signal that the United Nations would continue its effort to enhance the provision of truthful and precise information regarding COVID-19 and promote communication around vaccination. Another delegation welcomed the Department's recent innovations and successes in sharing positive stories, developing strategic partnerships with civil society, the private sector and media companies and in mobilizing individuals to take action. The Department was encouraged to continue to act as an authoritative source of inspiring stories about the United Nations and the COVID-19 response. A delegation also highlighted the growing audience numbers and interaction via the United Nations website channels, which was evident, for example, during the 2021 Economic and Social Council forum on financing for development held in April 2021, where the meeting had been made available on the COVID-19 web portal, as well as on a podcast that gained a bigger audience.

5. A delegation emphasized the importance of supporting the Secretariat's commitment to putting the experience of the pandemic to good use, which was embodied in the "build back better" principle. The delegation highlighted that reduced expenditures in areas including online participation in some events in lieu of in-person presence and the redistribution of funds to cover other relevant aspects would contribute to the optimization of the programme budget for global communications and would make the Department compliant with the new reality.

6. A delegation expressed appreciation for the creation of a climate change team in support of communications efforts on climate change in the lead-up to the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference expected to take place in the autumn. The delegation also expressed its appreciation for the attention that the Department had given to peacekeeping operations, especially the promotion of women peacekeepers, and expressed its support and cooperation in that regard.

7. Delegations emphasized the importance of multilingualism, in particular in the context of the health and liquidity crisis that the Organization had faced, and encouraged the Department to continue to ensure equal treatment for all six official languages as a matter of principle and necessity, including through making tools and content available on different platforms (e.g., press releases on United Nations meetings) in those languages. Another delegation expressed its hope that the multilingual implementation of specialized projects would remain a priority for the Department in 2022 and called for the sustainable financing of such projects. Reference was made to the forty-third session of the Committee on Information, which had ended on 18 May 2021, and to its draft report ([A/AC.198/2021/L.3](#)), which contained draft resolution B on United Nations global communications policies and activities. In line with draft resolution B, a delegation took note of the progress made on multilingualism, including the Committee's request for the Department to ensure, through recruitment and training, that its workforce was diverse from a multilingual perspective. The same delegation emphasized the requirement for the Department to ensure that the minimum standards of multilingualism were applied to United Nations websites and that non-compliance with those standards had been included in the report of the Secretary-General on multilingualism ([A/75/798](#)).

8. A delegation reiterated a concern that it had expressed several times during past sessions of the Committee, that the statistics presented in the proposed programme plan for the results achieved over recent years (for example, the growing number of visits to United Nations websites and the dynamics of followers of and interactions with United Nations social media accounts) provided limited information because the data was not disaggregated for each of the six official languages. As a result, Member States continued to be unable to comprehend the real situation and dynamics that were critical for understanding the tempo and quality of the work by language. The delegation expressed its hope that this demand would be taken into consideration in the context of the programme plan for 2023.

9. A delegation recommended that the Department ensure that its global communication was accurate, impartial, comprehensive, balanced, coherent, timely and relevant and embed those principles in its objectives and strategy. Another delegation welcomed the frequent interactions of the Department with Member States through their permanent missions.

10. With regard to subprogramme 1, Strategic communications services, a delegation welcomed the continued focus on the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change, which it noted was at the core of global communications and the framework for recovering better from the COVID-19 pandemic. The delegation also highlighted one of the emerging challenges of the year, related to the rise in intolerance, racism and xenophobia emanating from the pandemic, which had not been explicitly mentioned in the 2022 programme plan, and urged the Department to continue its system-wide support to efforts to eradicate all forms of hatred, intolerance and discrimination, harassment, racism, hate speech and xenophobia. The delegation also sought clarification as to whether there was any provision to support such activity under the programme plan for 2022.

11. With regard to subprogramme 2, News services, a delegation welcomed the fact that the Department had achieved its largest ever outreach to global audiences across the largest spread of locations in 2020, while establishing the United Nations as a leading voice on the COVID-19 pandemic. On result 1: engaging youth through digital dynamism, the delegation welcomed the proposal to further expand the scale and scope of the new platform with the aim of engaging more deeply with younger target audience groups and sought clarification as to how it would be achieved.

12. A delegation noted that the new result 3: strengthened action on climate change, under subprogramme 1, and the new result 3: increased focus on climate change, under subprogramme 2, were focused mainly on climate change. The delegation sought clarification on how the Department would continue its work in enhancing public knowledge on other important areas such as peace and security and sustainable development.

13. Clarification was also sought on the proposed redeployment of 23 posts from the Social Media Section, under subprogramme 2, News services, to the Communications Campaigns Service, under subprogramme 1, Strategic communications services, including whether the Social Media Section would no longer exist starting from 2022, and the related risks, considering the importance of focusing on global priority topics, and the possibility of compromising the dissemination of purely informative content. The Chair emphasized that questions related to parts of the programme dealing with resources were not within the mandate of the Committee and called on the Committee to focus the discussion on part A of the programme. Further, clarification was sought on the coordination between News Services and Social Media Accounts, considering that the two sections were called upon to create content pertaining to the same topics while reporting to different

directors and on whether interactions with Member States would be negatively impacted as a result.

14. On subprogramme 3, Outreach and knowledge services, a delegation welcomed the Department's approach to partnerships which enhanced its ability to target and deliver its message to an even wider community, including young people, evidenced by the increased advocacy with a broad and international range of academic institutions, students and educators, the creative community and civil society. The delegation was encouraged by the Department's work on mobilizing partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, with partners numbering 174. Support was also expressed for the planned performance measure in table 28.7 to increase the duration of partnerships and the geographical and sectoral diversity of partners engaged in a compact for the decade of action to deliver the Goals by 2030.

Conclusions and recommendations

15. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly, at its seventy-sixth session, review the programme plan for programme 24, Global communications, of the proposed programme budget for 2022, under the agenda item entitled "Programme planning".**
