Committee on Information
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Statement delivered by

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Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations

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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, Serbia* and Albania*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Our thoughts are with the people and government of Nepal and neighbouring countries today in the aftermath of the earthquake that has struck the Kathmandu Valley.

Let me begin by warmly welcoming Ms. Cristina Gallach at her first meeting of the Committee of Information during her tenure as Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. We are very much looking forward to working with you and your colleagues during this session and beyond. We are also grateful to Mr. Maher Nasser for his work as Acting Head of the Department of Public Information. We would also like to congratulate the new members of the Bureau on their election. Rest assured, Mr. Chairman, of our commitment to working with you and the other members of the Bureau, as well as with the rest of the Committee, to make this 37th session of the Committee on Information a success.

As we all know, DPI has a central role to play in ensuring the success of the United Nations' endeavours in the area of public diplomacy. To secure continued support around the globe for the vital work the UN is engaged in, the Organisation must be able to explain in a clear and accessible manner what it is doing, and why, to as many people as possible, especially now, in the run up to the 70th anniversary of the UN. In that sense it should be in our common interest to support the DPI in doing the best job it can with the resources available to it.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
Mr. Chairman,

We welcome the Secretariat's efforts to mainstream multilingualism into all of the Secretariat's communication and information activities. Multilingualism is a priority matter for the EU and its Member States, where 24 official languages and twice as many regional and minority languages are in constant use. Multilingualism is essential for communicating the UN's actions to people all around the world, and is key to achieving accountability, transparency, ownership and sustainability of the UN's actions. Multilingualism is vital in an effective multilateral system and we believe that the extraordinary language diversity of the Secretariat staff is an asset for DPI to fulfil its mandate in the most cost-efficient and effective manner.

The EU and its Member States have read the three reports of the SG on strategic communications services, news services and outreach services of DPI with great interest. We agree with the approach of DPI to continue to develop, lead and implement communications campaigns on the priority issues defined by Member States, using a range of communications tools and taking advantage of the wide and varied opportunities for interactive outreach enabled by the use of social media platforms. With the UN's presence and impact on social media expanding - also in languages that had previously been underserved - DPI's ability to spread core United Nations messages globally will be reinforced. We underscore DPI's activities to strengthen communications coherence and collaboration across the United Nations system through its leading role in the United Nations Communications Group and its issue-specific task forces and through the UN Development Group.

We also welcome DPI's intention to develop innovative ways to streamline administration, to implement cost-effective ways of direct communication between Headquarters and field offices and to improve the delivery of programmes both on digital and traditional platforms and through strengthened partnerships with international and local actors, in particular
United Nations Country Teams. The notion of 'one UN' is indeed also applicable to the Organisation's public diplomacy efforts.

Regarding the SG’s report on DPI’s activities related to news services we agree with the approach to explore ways to further identify previously untapped audiences through innovative partnerships, since audiences and the public continuously change the way in which information is consumed. We look forward to hear from DPI on their experiences in reconfiguring how to meet those needs.

On outreach services, we welcome DPI’s activities to engage with the public in a variety of ways to garner support for the United Nations and its activities, both locally at Headquarters and around the world. The growing importance of youth-related activities is a testimony to the importance DPI attaches to education and empowering young people to face contemporary challenges. We also believe in further developing strategic alliances with key partners, including NGO’s and IGO’s, academia, foundations, the private sector and cultural institutions. Partnerships provide a creative, targeted, cost-effective and impactful way to expand outreach to varied audiences.

An element that we particularly welcome in the Secretariat’s activities is the emphasis placed on increasing the involvement of civil society in the UN’s activities, which is a priority issue for us. As expressed on previous occasions, the EU and its Member States remain concerned by attempts to exclude some civil society organisations from involvement in the work of the UN, which is counter-productive and contradictory to the core values of the Organisation. For the UN to continue to be effective and relevant, its work needs to be understood and complemented by the widest possible audience, and NGOs and other civil society actors are an essential part of that audience, as well as potential multipliers for the UN’s messages.

Mr. Chairman,

We are glad to see that issues such as the 70th Anniversary of the UN, the post-2015 development agenda and human rights issues, as well as many of our other policy priorities
at the UN, are the subject of dedicated thematic campaigns by the Department of Public Information. The outreach efforts of DPI and its network of Information Centres on these issues are invaluable for informing and engaging all stakeholders. Let me particularly highlight the important role played by the UN’s Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC), covering 22 countries in 13 languages, which can serve as an example for efficiency and effectiveness.

We commend the Department's work in keeping the public informed about the UN’s responses to crises around the world, from Syria to Yemen to Ukraine, from the fight against Ebola, in which DPI’s role in raising awareness is much appreciated, to climate change. The upcoming 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Paris in December 2015 will be another key milestone in this regard. As a visible and meaningful contribution to the post-2015 agenda, we would also encourage the Secretariat to reduce the environmental impact of its actions by avoiding the distribution of printed materials to the fullest possible extent and making full use of e-services. The digitisation of today's world allows us to share any information at any time in the most sustainable and paper-smart way.

The full spectrum of human rights issues merits consistent, year-round attention by DPI, not only through campaigns around commemorative events. One way of providing more consistent coverage of both thematic and geographic issues would be to give greater publicity to published reports of the UN Secretary-General as well as activities of the Human Rights Council. Human rights issues should continue to feature high on the list of priorities for the Department.

Allow me, Mr. Chairman, to make some remarks on the freedom of expression and opinion. Recent events in Europe and in other parts of the world have made clear that these values have to be protected, have to be cherished. Attacks on the cornerstones of our societies, our freedom of expression, opinion and belief target fundamental human rights that are at the heart of the European Union and its Member States as well as the United Nations: solidarity, freedom, including freedom of expression, pluralism, democracy, tolerance and human dignity. Far too many journalists worldwide are censored, jailed, kidnapped or killed for their work. It is our collective responsibility to put an end to these tragic events and to hold the
perpetrators responsible for their crimes. Also, all citizens have the right to live free from fear, whatever their opinions or beliefs and should be free to share information. We should safeguard these common values and protect all from violence based on ethnic or religious motivations and racism. We are grateful for the work the UN in general and DPI in particular are doing in this regard.

The European Union and its Member States are looking forward to participate actively in the discussion of this year's session of the Committee on Information and reiterate their commitment to support the DPI's important work.

Thank you, Mr Chairman