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Statement by the Acting Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications at the opening of the Thirty-ninth session of the Committee on Information

24 April 2017

Mr. Chairman, Ambassador Jan Kickert,

Dear members of the Bureau of the Committee on Information,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the Committee on Information begins deliberating on “Questions relating to information”, it is my honour to address you as Acting Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications and Head of the Department of Public Information (DPI). The Secretary-General of the United Nations has called for a reform of our communications strategy, upgrading our tools and platforms to reach people around the globe. We in DPI are already implementing changes to ensure that UN communications today are relevant, strategic and accessible, in languages that people can understand and on platforms they can reach, so that the work and goals of the UN are better understood.

I would like to acknowledge the fine leadership and steadfast support of the outgoing Chairman, Ambassador Kaha Imnadze, and his Bureau; and I look forward to the Committee’s continued support of DPI as the public voice of the UN.

I would also like to take the opportunity to pay tribute to Under-Secretary-General Cristina Gallach for both her able stewardship of DPI and the passion and energy she brought to the role.

The General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/71/101, requested that the Secretary-General report to the Committee at its thirty-ninth session on the activities of DPI and on the implementation of its recommendations on questions relating to public information.

The three reports submitted in response to that request provide a summary of the Department’s activities in regard to strategic communications services, news services and

three-day innovation workshop organized by the Common Ground companies, in partnership with Google. Creative teams from those companies will compete to pitch ideas on how to promote the SDGs among youth.

Mr. Chairman,

The Department is leading UN system-wide strategic communications around several Member State priorities. Following up on the landmark 2016 UN summit on refugees and migrants, the Department is providing support to the office of the new Special Representative for International Migration and the intergovernmental process that is expected to deliver global compacts for migration and refugees. DPI continues to lead the ‘Together’ initiative endorsed by Member States last September to counter xenophobia and to promote diversity and the social inclusion of refugees and migrants. The aim is to counter negative perceptions of migrants and refugees, and to do so at the local level. In one example, UNIC Mexico City partnered with Eons

updates; and strengthen crisis communications response by putting in place procedures to better communicate on credible allegations as they come to light.

We are working with the Department of Management to develop a long-term internal communications plan, which would include information on sexual exploitation and abuse permanently available on iSeek and other UN intranet platforms, with a focus on how this issue affects staff, including with regard to reporting of allegations, and whistle-blower protections for those who do report.

DPI is also working closely with UN peacekeeping operations on how the missions can strengthen their communications at the local level and how DPI, with its multimedia and multilingual communications platforms, can amplify the messages to a global audience. DPI has already produced a number of videos, interviews with officials, and stories on sexual exploitation and abuse, accompanied by social media postings, on our various platforms in all six official languages.

We especially look forward to working with the Victims' Rights Advocate, once appointed, to help formulate effective outreach strategies to ensure that victims of such heinous acts receive the support that they need and deserve.

I would like to remark that in regard to paragraph 18 of last year's Committee on Information resolution encouraging collaborative arrangements between DPI and
