

## **76<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

### **Fourth Committee Joint General Debate “Question of information” (Agenda Item 58)**

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#### **INDIA STATEMENT**

Thank you Chairperson for giving me the floor. We thank Under Secretary General Melissa Fleming for her briefing to the Committee.

While information and communication technologies have transformed the ways in which we receive, consume and share information, they have been also used to mislead public opinion or to fuel violence and hatred. Fake news is trumping facts creating a new normal. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the situation further. Misinformation has spread rapidly, like the virus itself. India was one of the co-authors of the Cross-Regional Statement on “Infodemic” to highlight this issue.

In the above context, people around the world have been looking for a trusted information source that provides scientific and fact-based information. The UN system, and DGC in particular, have shouldered this critical responsibility. Through the coordinated communications response by the UN Communications Group Crisis Team, which is co-chaired by the DGC, the UN has earned the trust of global citizens as a reliable source of COVID-related information.

We commend the DGC for launching the ‘Verified’ initiative and the ‘Pause’ campaign and also ensuring the content presented on COVID-19 UN portal is relevant and up-to-date. The innovative use of social media by the Department to promote and amplify the these initiatives is also commendable. The significant contribution of United Nations Information Centers in this campaign cannot be overlooked and merits appreciation.

Media and information literacy would go a long way in addressing concerns about the exponential spread and proliferation of disinformation. Recognizing its importance, India, along with a group of like-minded countries, had spearheaded the General Assembly resolution to commemorate October 24-31 as ‘Global Media and Information Literacy’ week. We encourage DGC to engage with Member States and other UN/ international organizations in appropriate commemoration of this week.

DGC's "OnlyTogether" campaign to promote vaccine equity is commendable. However, these campaigns have predominantly focused on the COVAX initiative. A great deal of work is also being done by Member states to ensure reliable and affordable vaccines are made available to citizens around the world. We urge the Department to also suitably highlight these efforts as well.

Equally important is the focus on vaccine safety. Dissemination of scientific and fact-based answers to the above questions are key to enhance the 'trustworthiness' of the vaccines among the people. As member states ramp up their vaccination programs globally, we urge the DGC to give due focus to vaccine safety, in its global communications, to shore up public confidence on vaccines and help address the discriminatory travel regime.

Chairperson,

India believe that multilingualism, as a core principle of the UN, extends beyond its official language. To promote multilingualism, we have been partnering with the Department, since 2018, in evolving a unique model to mainstream and consolidate news and multimedia content in Hindi in the News portal and social media for the global audience. Over the years, we have seen the interest in such content grow exponentially and, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report to this Committee, the Hindi edition of UN News has become a popular brand. Within a short period of its commencement, UN's Hindi social media accounts have also witnessed a massive following. We encourage DGC to leverage these platforms effectively in disseminating positive stories from across the region and the world.

We value the support extended by DGC in commemorating the International Day of Yoga and the International Day of non-violence. Together with UN Academic Impact, we have also inaugurated a 'high-level' Dialogue on gender equality in memory of late Dr. Hansa Mehta, an Indian activist and scholar, who made a significant contribution to the gender-balance of Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We hope to continue this partnership with UNAI in the coming years as well, and use the dialogue as a platform to raise awareness on gender issues.

Chairperson,

Let me conclude by assuring you and the Department of Global Communication of India's continued support to the Department's activities and initiatives. I thank you.

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