

United Nations Development Programme



Tanzania

**Statement at the
Consultative Meeting on the Mkukuta
Communications Strategy**

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**PPF Tower Conference Room
1 June 2005**

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Development partner colleagues

Friends from the media

Ladies and gentlemen

It does not matter what our individual personalities are, what ideological leanings we have, which organization we work for, as public officials, international civil servants, donor partners, business and civil society, strategic communications have already changed the way we do things, the way we work, the way we relate to government, and indeed the way we do business overall.

Now the imperative of strategic communications is starting to change the way we design and implement initiatives that impact directly on the lives of citizens and communities, including especially the poor and the vulnerable. We are all living witnesses to the majority 'NO' vote in Monday's referendum in France on the EU Constitution.

While a host of factors account for the rejection of the EU Constitution by the French, majority of the commentators also agreed that the triumph of the 'NO' vote is also explained by one factor – lack of strategic communication: the crafting of the Constitution did not involve the people and what the constitution is meant to achieve had not been sufficiently communicated to the people. This is a vivid illustration of the power of strategic communication and the consequences of failure to effectively communicate in today's world.

Indeed today's workshop in being held at a time where there is growing emphasis on shifting accountability from external actors to internal actors, whereby governments are held fully accountable to its citizen on human development outcomes expressed within the context of the Millennium Development Goals. But the real question is when people are not sufficiently informed, when people are not sufficiently empowered through information and knowledge, how can they demand accountability from their governments?

And importantly when people are not sufficiently informed about policies that impact directly on their lives and their livelihoods, how can they embrace such

initiatives from government and fully participate in the implementation of such policies and strategies meant to improve their lot? It is in light of the foregoing that I wish to commend the Vice-President's office, and the Government of Tanzania more broadly for its vision in preparing such a comprehensive communications strategy – which is the subject of today's gathering - as a complement to the National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction – the MKUKUTA.

This is certainly not a welcome first from the Vice Presidents office. We all witnessed the extensive consultations that accompanied the preparation of the MKUKUTA, and how this has helped strengthened the ownership of the strategy. Communications certainly played a vital role in ensuring that the MKUKUTA embodies a national consensus of development goals.

The shift taken by MKUKUTA from the priority sector approach pursued by the first PRS to an outcome based approach will definitely increase the demand for coordination and alignment of initiatives undertaken by various stakeholders to the shared poverty outcomes. MKUKUTA's broader, wider and more inclusive partnerships means communication will be of strategic

importance in order for its targets and goals to be attained within the specified timeframe.

This being said, let me take a step back and emphasise perhaps the obvious: that communication, and the various communication stakeholders and the media have an important and strategic contribution to the implementation of the MKUKUTA. I see this contribution in two broad ways:

- First, ensuring all MKUKUTA implementation strategies, policy actions and poverty monitoring outcomes are in the public domain, and are stimulating discussions and public action targeted at accelerating the pace of poverty reduction and the attainment of the MDGs.
- Second, using communication as a strategic tool for collecting feedback on MKUKUTA implementation and incorporating the feedback into design of further anti-poverty policies and budgets.

Communication is therefore of tremendous value in galvanising support for the shared poverty reduction outcomes expressed in the MKU^{KU}TATA and ensuring a multi-sectoral response to poverty reduction as envisaged under the strategy.

The United Nations recognises that all sectors have a contribution to make to the attainment of the global MDGs, and has therefore set a similar strategic communication campaign on the MDGs at the global level. The global MDG campaign involves and targets civil society organisations, the media, private sector, Governments from both the global North and South, as well as the general public. In recognition of the strategic importance of the MKUKUTA in attaining the global MDGs, the UN System in Tanzania has made a strategic choice to nest its communication and advocacy programme of the MDGs in the MKUKUTA, which is the national vehicle for attaining the MDGs.

And now, let me reiterate the commitment of the UN System in Tanzania to continue its support for communication for development. UNDP started a partnership in this area with the Directorate of Communications in both the mainland and Zanzibar

State Houses back in 2001. This partnership has grown and has now developed and resulted among others in a Government Communications Policy that was unveiled recently in Bagamoyo and in which I believe all the Government Communications Officers in this room participated in. Furthermore, in recognition of the strategic importance of empowering key actors to enable them better engage in poverty policy dialogue, UNDP in collaboration with the Vice President's Office and the University of Dar es Salaam's Tanzania School of Journalism has initiated a Short-term Training Programme on Poverty Policy Analysis which is targeting a broad group of stakeholders including Members of Parliament, Senior and Middle level civil servants, civil society organisations, journalists and media personnel.

UNDP is pleased to be able to take this partnership, together with the Mkukuta Communication Strategy, forward with the Vice President's Office to strengthen the overall implementation of MKUKUTA.

Let me close by strongly re-iterating the point I made at the outset: that effective communication is vital in trying to maximize peoples' involvement in national

development endeavours and to improve their confidence in their government and in policy and programme implementation.

To transform the notion of national ownership from rhetoric to reality requires that we must increase popular participation. But popular participation cannot be achieved amidst ignorance. Broad participation of the people in the crafting of the MKUKUTA was a good first step, and I wish to take this opportunity to once again commend Government for seeking to consolidate these gains, not just through encouraging the flow of ideas and information, but seeking to give people a real say, combined with choices and opportunities, in the implementation of the MKUKUTA by further empowering them through the implementation of this Communication Strategy.

I thank you.