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Chairman: Mr. MATHIAS (Portugal)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 59: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued)
- (d) CO-OPERATION AND ASSISTANCE IN THE APPLICATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF NATIONAL INFORMATION AND MASS COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS FOR SOCIAL PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT: REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued) (A/35/21, 362 and Add.1, 504 and Corr.1, 603)

1. Mr. BUTLER (Deputy Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union) said that it was now readily recognized that telecommunication was the primary means of assisting rapid access and receipt of communications and information. For ITU, telecommunication technologies, with all their ramifications, embraced space satellite communications and the many applications of telecommunications in space to satisfy various functional needs. They included satellite and terrestrial broadcasting and television, communications with ships and aircraft for safety and control, fibre optics and the transmission of data by computer.

2. The agreement of Governments (frequently at the treaty level) was indispensable for the provision of telecommunication services and facilities. The very detailed regulatory texts of the Union were supplemented by a considerable volume of persuasive law of standards (in the form of recommendations) drawn up by the Administrations and their representatives and designed to ensure satisfactory interconnection between the telecommunication networks established by Governments or their entities. Likewise, at the national level, functional specifications of the sending and receiving apparatus had to be developed against criteria established by the Governments for information transfers between internal domestic users. Where the use of the radio frequency spectrum was involved, even for internal domestic services, it was necessary also to have a high degree of international agreement, including procedures to be observed for co-ordination with both neighbouring and distant countries. The adaptation of procedures or agreement on new procedures was a continuing process in ITU's International Consultative Committees comprising members and entities of the Union. In telecommunications, there were the basic prerequisites of agreement on the minutest of details for the orderly, economic and effective introduction or adaptation of new technologies or services, even before the stage of the detailed planning and establishment by national authorities of national and international telecommunication systems; the requirement for collaboration had today become truly indispensable.

3. In fulfilment of its obligations as the specialized agency in the field of telecommunications in the United Nations system, ITU had been an active participant

(Mr. Butler, ITU)

in the series of intergovernmental conferences on communication policies and, in particular, the Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development, held in Paris in April 1980. That Conference had recommended by consensus the International Programme for Development of Communication, the objectives of which included, in particular, the reinforcement of co-ordination between ITU and other United Nations bodies. *Inter alia*, the consensus provided an opportunity for the rapid expansion of low-cost/high-speed transfer of information on an unprecedented scale, subject only to international co-operation, including investment collaboration and resource sharing. The ITU Administrative Council of 36 member States had already endorsed the importance of ITU participation in the International Programme for the Development of Communication as an institutional responsibility, and on the basis of equality and complementarity. ITU had participated also in the UNESCO General Conference at Belgrade where the relevant elements of the Paris Conference consensus had been adopted.

4. As an executing agency for UNDP or under funds-in-trust, ITU administered some \$30 million worth of programmes per year for various aspects of infrastructure development, and the associated costs of Governments much more than matched that contribution. Co-ordination of resources, which were limited and generally inadequate, was therefore important. ITU had received a substantial grant to seek to bring modern and appropriate technology to rural areas, in response to the decisions of the General Assembly on the need for integrated rural development as a high priority. The grant had permitted feasibility studies to begin in a major region south of the Sahara. Moreover, prospects were encouraging for financing the basic capital requirements for investment in a satellite (space) segment facility if studies proved the benefits of such technology. The approach was similar to that now foreseen in the collaboration between the countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations for their rural areas which would be served by the Indonesian satellite. ITU studies had led to the acceptance of similar concepts by the Governments of the South Pacific. Those were remarkable examples of technical and economic co-operation between developing countries in the interest of information transfer and communications needs.

5. The ITU Administrative Council had put the accent on the need for co-ordination between ITU activities and the new International Programme. Telecommunication systems were capital-intensive but, with international co-operation and shared use, they could bring even lower costs of communication than in the past. With regard to the need for intergovernmental agreement and planning in the harmonious development of telecommunications, the decisions of the World Administrative Radio Conference included a programme of conferences on the planning and use of the radio frequency spectrum and space orbits, consistent with the well-established principles of equitable and assured access by all nations. The outcome of the conferences would meet communication and information transmission requirements of all kinds through national and international telecommunications.

6. Turning to the report of the Committee on Information in regard to the establishment of short-wave broadcasting transmitters for the United Nations, he said that agreements would be necessary - on the proposed location of the transmitters - with the country in which they were to be established; but at the

(Mr. Butler, ITU)

present time no specific decision by a World Administrative Radio Conference of ITU was necessary. Subsequently, action would be needed to enter into the co-ordination process with all the other national administrations.

7. The fostering of a rapid improvement in telecommunication infrastructures was a fundamental requirement for the realization of a "new, more just and more effective world information and communication order".

8. Mr. BAH (Guinea) said that it was interesting to see the members of the international community gradually becoming more aware of the problem of information and communication. Soon, as a result of progress in electronics and space technology, no country would, in the sphere of information, be able to escape from the influence of Powers which possessed such technology. However, communication and information should not be conceived as a monopolist system in which circulation was only in one direction, from an active centre to passive receivers, or as a system in which, while some were actors and producers, others were reduced to the role of spectators and consumers. That was what was happening in fact since, in general, in a process of alienating intoxication, developing peoples were receiving more information about the great Powers than about the realities of their own countries. On the contrary, the objective of information systems should be to give each people a knowledge first, of itself and then of its relation to other peoples, in order to make men more brotherly and more united. For that purpose, information should circulate in alternating movements of flux and reflux, in which each pole was in turn subject and object of the information.

9. To that end, it would be necessary to adopt technical and material communication methods that were supported by political will - methods that had been carefully studied and adapted to the current needs of individual countries and of the world in general in accordance with the planning and co-ordination provided by regional organizations and the United Nations system - i.e. by Headquarters services, UNESCO, ITU and UPU. In that connexion, Guinea attached particular importance to the World Administrative Radio Conference, the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, the Lagos Plan of Action and, particularly, the Inter-governmental Conference on Communication Policies held at Yaoundé which had been followed by the twenty-first session of the UNESCO General Conference at Belgrade. The Belgrade Conference of UNESCO had adopted important resolutions which represented a basic contribution to the establishment of a new information order. The revolution in the information world had raised great hopes and deserved unconditional support, but the task was enormous and required a strategic approach. African countries were well aware of that, and were asking for aid in maintaining a common front to promote regional integration policies, as recommended by the OAU and ECA, with a view to overcoming the political, ideological and psychological factors hindering the advance of democracy in the field of information.

10. The idea of freedom of information had often been described as the basic principle and essential factor in the democratization of information. Much might be said on that topic. The first freedom was freedom of access to communication and information media, and the second freedom was that of the supplier of information, who must shake off his prejudices. The third freedom was the freedom to search for truth, while respecting the sovereignty and established law of peoples. It was therefore necessary to distrust some suppliers of information who

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(Mr. Bah, Guinea)

claimed the freedom to distort the truth and discredit those who did not share their way of thinking. Truth often had a sociological basis; for any nation, truth was above all what the people as a whole recognized it to be.

11. In that connexion, the peoples of the third world justly claimed the freedom to exist, and the freedom to preserve their cultural identity without being marked with ideological labels. It was time to stop classifying countries on the basis of their assumed alignment with East or West, as if that were a rational and objective manner of distinguishing between them. One of the most important tasks of the United Nations Department of Public Information, whose work the Guinean delegation valued very highly, lay precisely in that field. If the Department were provided with sufficient technical and manpower resources, if it stood aside from political and ideological strife and performed its tasks in the light of the ideals of justice, solidarity, freedom, well-being and the peace of the international community, it could produce far-reaching changes in the information and the life of peoples. It might also serve as a link between all regional agencies with a view to achieving a better distribution of information originating in or addressed to Member States. It could thus use the freedom which it enjoyed to achieve certain basic objectives which were identical with those of the international community, i.e., information for the purpose of educating and changing and information for the purpose of fighting injustice and establishing a climate of mutual understanding, peace and happiness.

12. Mr. BOYADJIEV (Bulgaria) said that the role of information in international relations was important because it governed the ability of international opinion to come fully to grips with problems vital to the whole of mankind which could not be solved without consultation and collaboration between countries. His delegation supported the proposition that information was a powerful factor which, depending on its content and the manner of its application, could in one way or another influence both the general public and the individual. The climate of international relations and the degree of mutual trust among States depended to a large extent on the content of information disseminated. At times the political climate was poisoned by internationally manipulated misinformation.

13. The UNESCO Declaration on fundamental principles concerning the contribution of the mass media to strengthening peace and international understanding, to the promotion of human rights and to countering racialism, apartheid and incitement to war presented for the first time a clear set of principles governing the use of communications media. It stipulated that they should be used to promote peace and understanding among peoples and to combat war propaganda. It should be pointed out that as long ago as 1947 General Assembly resolution 110 (II) condemned all forms of propaganda which encouraged any threat to the peace. Since that time the international community had declared on several occasions that incitement to war was incompatible with the United Nations Charter. Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights stipulated that any propaganda for war should be prohibited by law, and that any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constituted incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence should also be prohibited. Unfortunately, some countries which had become parties to the Covenant were expressing reservations as to that particular article under the pretext of preserving the freedom of mass media.

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(Mr. Boyadjiev, Bulgaria)

14. At a time when the process of détente more than ever needed strong support for its preservation and amplification, there were forces which used the mass media to counter-attack the achievements of détente, to unleash slanderous propaganda campaigns against the socialist countries, and to try to justify the arms race and all kinds of new military strategies. Mass media were manipulated to misinform public opinion about the progressive revolutionary changes occurring in some developing countries, thus hindering their social and economic progress. Such a situation could not be reconciled with the idea that the dissemination of information should serve the noble ideals of peace, strengthen international security and mutual understanding, and help to develop progressive trends in various countries. On the contrary, information was being used for destructive purposes.

15. It had often been said that "information is a carrier of freedom" and must not be "the tool of Government". However, a great danger arose when those who enjoyed access to the media demanded total freedom for themselves, while rejecting any degree of responsibility since they considered that the information function was absolute. All too frequently the two concepts, freedom and responsibility, were seen as contradictory, without regard for the consequences of disseminating information. The advocates of free information also said that that doctrine was based on the conviction that, in any society, ignorance of facts was always harmful. But an analysis of the situation with regard to the exchange of information throughout the world showed that the exchange was out of balance. Ignorance of real facts existed precisely in those countries which proclaimed their support for free information. That was obviously an anomalous situation since the flow of information from the major Western States was hundreds of times greater than the reserve flow despite the fact that two thirds of mankind lived in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Thus, the "free flow" of information was only a one-way flow, the content of which served the interests of the monopolistic information agencies. Such one-way information amounted to a cultural invasion of the developing countries to the detriment of their national cultures. As the Director-General of UNESCO had recently stated, the influence of a few international corporations in the information field amounted to cultural aggression.

16. The Government of Bulgaria supported efforts to improve the existing conditions for the dissemination of information and to create a new information and communications order, the basic ideas of which were enshrined in the UNESCO Declaration on mass media, the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, the resolutions of the twenty-first General Conference of UNESCO, and the final documents of the Conferences of the Non-Aligned States at Colombo, Lomé and Havana.

17. The International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems had made an important contribution to the efforts of the international community to use mass media to strengthen understanding and mutual trust among peoples. The Commission's report gave a broad view of the development of mass media and an important analysis of the problem of the commercialization of information and its adverse effect on the content of information and their national and international flow thereof. To become "news", facts were often transformed to make them "saleable" and thus meet the dominant requirements of the market. The Commission had also paid due attention to the professional conduct of journalists which was an important factor in the establishment of a new world information and communication

(Mr. Boyadjiev, Bulgaria)

order. His delegation considered it very important that professional ethics should be based on the indivisibility of freedom and responsibility.

18. The resolutions adopted at the twenty-first General Conference of UNESCO represented a new and important step towards the implementation of a new international information order, which was to be based on the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Freedom of information could not be divorced from its concomitant responsibilities. In order to establish a new international information order the inequalities which existed in the dissemination of information had to be eliminated, along with the negative repercussions of the activities of monopolies. The legitimate struggle of the developing countries for independence in the field of information was motivated by their desire to accelerate their political, economic, social and cultural development. The establishment of independent national information systems in the developing countries, which was closely linked to the struggle against colonialism in the cultural and intellectual spheres, was a significant factor in the elimination of imbalances and in expanding the dissemination of varied and objective information on developing countries. His country had co-operated with a number of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Bulgaria understood and supported recent efforts by developing countries to promote and consolidate regional co-operation in the field of information through the establishment of information pools in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with a view to eliminating their dependence on imperialist information monopolies. A positive step in that direction was the recent adoption of the International Programme for the Development of Communication. He trusted that the General Assembly, at the current session, would duly assess UNESCO's contribution and responsibility in the drafting of the fundamental principles and norms of the new international information order, and that it would further promote close and fruitful co-operation between the United Nations and UNESCO.

19. As a member of the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, Bulgaria attached great importance to the activities of the United Nations in the field of public information. It acknowledged the work carried out by the Department of Public Information, in accordance with the recommendations made by the General Assembly at its first session. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that those activities sometimes departed from the principles which should guide them. His delegation thus deemed especially important the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Working Group, contained in paragraph 76 of the annex to the report of the Committee on Information (A/35/21), according to which the Department of Public Information should continue to orient its work with particular reference to such issues as international peace and security, disarmament, peace-keeping operations, decolonization and racial discrimination, human rights and the establishment of a new international economic order. Expansion and enhancement of the effectiveness of the Department of Public Information's activities should not be achieved through the investment of new budgetary resources, however, but through a more rational use of available resources.

20. His delegation wished to repeat that it continued to attach great importance to problems relating to information and was ready to co-operate for the noble purpose of using information in the interests of peace, understanding among people and social progress.

21. Mrs. DANSILIO (Uruguay) said that, in the words of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, Mr. Adolfo Folle Martínez, at the thirteenth plenary meeting of the General Assembly, information was closely linked to the basic modes of contemporary life. Modern technology should be used to the full to make information available and thus to enhance communication between men and peoples, and to disseminate culture and education. Technological progress reproduced in the field of information the same problems which existed in other fields. Many members of the international community lacked the material base to keep pace with the ever increasing rate of technological and scientific progress. The imbalance between rich and poor countries, between North and South, was a regrettable fact which demanded an effort, if not to eliminate it forthwith, at least to reduce it. That had been stated by the Committee on Information, which recognized, as did all Member States of the United Nations, the need to promote a new information and communication order, based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information. As the report of the Committee on Information had also stressed, the only way for developing countries to achieve the independence they required in the field of information and communication was to increase the flow of varied and objective information on events of concern to them, using their own information services as much as possible.

22. The threat to freedom of expression, institutional stability and the cultural identity of peoples which certain aspects of modern technology could represent should be constantly borne in mind. It was thus imperative and urgent for the most advanced means of communication to be made available to all countries. Communication policies should contribute to knowledge, understanding, friendship and co-operation and the bringing together of peoples, through the identification of common aspirations and needs, while respecting national sovereignty, the international legal principle of non-intervention by States and the cultural and political diversity of societies and men, from the viewpoint of universal solidarity and peace. The basic aim should be to establish a new international communication order, aimed at strengthening world peace and promoting the progress and development of all peoples, based on such fundamental principles as diversity of the information media, multiplicity of information sources, the international right of reply and the exclusive competence of each State to determine its own communication policies in accordance with its own needs and situation.

23. With respect to some of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group with respect to the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, contained in the report of the Committee on Information, her delegation considered that measures should be adopted immediately to correct the current geographical imbalance in the staff of the Department of Public Information, so as to increase the number of nationals of developing countries and achieve greater linguistic diversity. Efforts should be made to modernize the structure of the Radio Service and special attention should be paid to appropriate programming in the main languages of the various regions. Appropriate financial, technical and legal studies should be carried out so that international short-wave transmission could begin immediately, using United Nations installations and frequencies exclusively. DPI should provide in-service training and extend its programmes of briefings for journalists so that a greater number of them, especially from developing countries, might become familiar with the operations and activities of the United Nations.



(Mrs. Dansilio, Uruguay)

24. Her delegation was convinced of the need to strengthen and co-ordinate the activities and programmes of the United Nations system in the fields of communication and information, which was a crucial factor in implementing international decisions on the establishment of a new international information and communication order.
25. Mr. WEIBGEN (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the report of the Committee on Information (A/35/21) reflected the process of consultation between the Committee on Information and its Ad Hoc Working Group on the one hand, and FAO and other agencies on the other. Nevertheless, it was necessary to stress the need to undertake large-scale information activities at the regional, national and international levels in connexion with World Food Day, which would be observed for the first time on 16 October 1981 and annually thereafter. The aim of the Day was to increase public awareness of the nature and dimensions of the long-term world food problem, and further to promote the sense of national and international solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty. Nothing could be more timely when there were more than 400 million people suffering from malnutrition and hunger in the world and some 30 developing countries were affected by abnormal food shortages. The preparatory activities were already under way. He urged all Governments and organizations to contribute to the success of World Food Day as a further sign of their commitment to the implementation of the new international economic order in the field of food and agriculture.
26. He noted with satisfaction that the Second Committee had just unanimously adopted a draft resolution on World Food Day (A/C.2/35/L.103), by which the General Assembly, considering that food was a requisite for human survival and well-being and a fundamental human necessity, welcomed the observance of an annual World Food Day and urged Governments and national, regional and international organizations to contribute to the effective commemoration of World Food Day to the maximum extent possible. Information activities relating to World Food Day and the support of the Special Political Committee were important to the successful celebration of the Day.
27. Mr. SUWONDO (Indonesia) said that the establishment of a new information and communication order was a long-term process that required the strong political will of Member States for its goals to be fully realized. His delegation was aware that there were divergent views regarding the issue, but in recent years there had been indications that the divergencies had somewhat diminished and that there had been a greater willingness on the part of all countries to co-operate sincerely in the establishment of a new world information and communication order. There was also growing constructive co-operation and co-ordination among the various organizations and bodies of the United Nations system that were concerned with the question of information and mass communication.
28. His delegation was pleased to note that the suggestions formulated by the Committee had been followed by the Department of Public Information, with a resultant improvement in its programmes and activities. DPI was to be commended for those efforts, particularly in view of its limited resources; his delegation, however, shared the view expressed by other delegations that through a more rational and efficient utilization of present resources, DPI's problems of reorganization and personnel policies could be satisfactorily resolved. None the less, it was important to be flexible in dealing with those problems.

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(Mr. Suwondo, Indonesia)

29. Another important task facing DPI in relation to the new information and communication order was the need to improve the flow of United Nations information to developing countries in the economic, social and cultural fields. That was especially important since DPI, with the other organizations and bodies in the United Nations system, could help to counter-balance the information emanating from certain States and media which often presented a distorted picture of the achievements of the developing countries.

30. Other questions which still persisted were those regarding personnel and linguistic balance. His delegation supported the need for an equitable geographical distribution of the personnel of DPI which would give developing countries a greater voice in its activities. It was important that DPI should make more use of regional languages in its information materials and, in that regard, his delegation was pleased to note the Ad Hoc Working Group's support for the production of information on a regional basis and the strengthening of the United Nations units concerned with information. If DPI was to be a component part of the efforts to establish a new information and communication order, it was of the utmost important that the techniques for the production and dissemination of information at the disposal of DPI should be upgraded.

31. It was a welcome development that the developing countries had made efforts to combine their capabilities, especially on the regional level, and that assistance for such endeavours had been forthcoming, inter alia from UNESCO, UNDP and DPI in their co-operation with the News Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies. However, greater efforts were needed on the part of the developed countries in the information and communication field. In that connexion, his delegation called for the continuation and expansion of programmes for training journalists and broadcasting personnel in the United Nations, and greater co-operation among organizations of the United Nations system and DPI for such training services.

32. His delegation was happy to note the results of the last General Conference of UNESCO, particularly the establishment of the International Programme for Development of Communication (IPDC), the establishment of which would help in reducing the present gap between the developed and developing countries in the communication field. Indonesia called on all States, as well as all organizations and bodies of the United Nations system dealing with the question of information and communication, to support the activities of IPDC. Furthermore, the call for the creation of an international fund under the auspices of IPDC promised that assistance to the developing countries in the field of information and communication would be assured. The struggle to achieve a new information and communication order was a duty of all States, both developed and developing, since the objectives could be realized only through co-operation and understanding.

33. Mr. STEVENS (Sierra Leone) congratulated the Department of Public Information and such United Nations specialized agencies as UNESCO and UNDP on the laudable services they had rendered the international community during the current calendar year. His delegation was especially grateful for the assistance the Government of Sierra Leone had received towards the establishment of the Sierra Leone News Agency, precisely at the time when Sierra Leone had had the honour of playing host to the thirty-fifth Summit of the Organization of African Unity, held in Freetown early in 1980.

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(Mr. Stevens, Sierra Leone)

34. Nevertheless, there were still unmet needs, especially in developing countries, for more just and more effective information and communication services. For example, many developing countries still did not possess the ability to respond to sensational and adverse information about them, disseminated by those countries which controlled advanced information and communications systems. The sovereignty and dignity of each State must be respected, no matter what its size and wealth. His delegation called the attention of the Committee to the prevailing discrepancies in the distribution of resources, technology and manpower in the field of information and communication services and expressed the hope that such discrepancies would be systematically eliminated.
35. Radio was one of the most common information services that the countries of Africa, among other developing countries received; about 80 per cent of United Nations daily radio short-wave broadcasts were beamed at Africa. However, because of the limited capacity of most African stations, those broadcasts were lost or were simply not received. To remedy that situation, measures should be adopted such as were recommended in the Report of the Committee on Information under the heading "United Nations short-wave broadcasts" (A/35/21, annex, para. 77). Both television and radio programmes were mainly produced outside the African Unit, which, furthermore, was understaffed. It was time for Africans to be given a chance to produce information programmes for Africa, taking into account the linguistic configurations of the continent. His delegation expressed the hope that DPI would seek a desirable balance in that regard.
36. Finally, the speaker called on the Committee to support the efforts recommended in the resolutions of the two conferences of broadcasting organizations of the non-aligned countries, the last of which had recently been held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and the first Conference of the Ministers of Communication of the Economic Community of West African States.
37. Mr. PETREE (United States of America) said that consensus and co-operation were the two indispensable elements in the process of building a new world information and communication order and the ultimate guarantee of achievement of a freer, wider and better balanced flow of information.
38. Referring to General Assembly resolution 34/182, he said that his country had joined in the consensus that had led to adoption of that resolution, which mandated the Committee on Information to continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, to evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations systems in the field of information and communications and to promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order.
39. Technological factors and consideration of State-to-State relations must not make the international community lose sight of the fact that the ultimate test of its efforts was the expansion of each individual's horizons and possibilities and respect for his or her dignity, for freedom of thought and expression and for the free circulation of ideas and news, which were fundamental human rights. His country attached great importance to those principles, which were fortunately receiving increasing recognition in the discussion of the new information order.

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(Mr. Petree, United States)

40. The representative of Singapore had attempted to differentiate between those who held the principle of freedom of the press sacred and those who held that freedom of the press was inseparable from responsibility, and in that connexion the representative of the Soviet Union had drawn a comparison with the possession of a driver's licence. Countries that valued a free press were not defending freedom without responsibility but believed that it was not the role of government to dictate what constituted responsible journalism; responsible journalism should be ensured by increasing the diversity of the media and improving the professional training of journalists. Where Governments determined what should and should not be disseminated, journalists became the servants rather than the watch-dogs of government.

41. The report of the Ad Hoc Working Group (A/35/21, annex) was a very clear statement of the questions on which the Committee on Information should focus. The Group itself had stated that implementation of its recommendations was a continuing process and that the Committee on Information should finish what it had first set out to do before launching into other areas. All changes contemplated should be possible within the current budget levels. Moreover, saturating the world with information about the United Nations would not automatically create better understanding, which could be achieved by selectivity, high professional standards and close co-operation with national and regional bodies.

42. He welcomed the pragmatic approach adopted in the Committee on Information and its Working Group, an approach which was also reflected in the report of the Secretary-General (A/35/504). However, it should be made clear that the report referred to the recommendations of the Committee on Information, whereas the recommendations were actually those of the Ad Hoc Working Group, which that Committee had decided to annex to its report, but which it had not adopted owing to the fact that there had been insufficient time for delegations to consider them. The report of the Secretary-General was commendable, particularly with regard to its sage advice that patience would be needed to make certain changes and that requested studies must be completed before new programmes were recommended or old programmes were dropped, which was particularly true of the proposals on United Nations short-wave and frequency modulation broadcasts in New York. His country had strong reservations with regard to such broadcasting, since it was convinced that much more satisfactory results could be achieved through more intensive use of existing facilities, both locally and internationally. The Secretary-General had requested that the General Assembly should endorse the undertaking of the necessary studies and his delegation supported that position.

43. With regard to the second and third parts of the mandate of the Committee on Information, the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) had begun to play a more active role in reviewing the specialized agencies' activities related to communications. Under a resolution adopted at the recently concluded session of the General Conference of UNESCO at Belgrade, the International Programme for the Development of Communication had been established within UNESCO. That Programme, which had an Intergovernmental Council of 35 member States, including his country, would provide, for the first time, a comprehensive means of identifying

(Mr. Petree, United States)

communication development needs and matching those needs with available bilateral, multilateral and private assistance. During its most recent session the General Conference of UNESCO had also adopted (A/35/362/Add.1, annex II) a resolution on the findings of the International Commission for the Study of Communication (MacBride report); his country had joined in its adoption by consensus, even though it did not endorse some parts of the text. The MacBride report was important as an aid for study and reflection and he particularly welcomed its affirmation of freedom and diversity in the flow and exchange of information. Although there had been disagreements at the General Conference, the large measure of co-operation and consensus achieved should be stressed. It was therefore regrettable that the representative of the Soviet Union had returned to polemics and accusations, attempting to place the blame for current international tensions on Western media; his approach, if pursued, could only disrupt the work of the Committee on Information.

44. Mr. RAHMAN (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) said that the world of today was linked by a network of communication and information that had been enhanced by the introduction of sophisticated technology. Unfortunately, those who had traditionally held control over the network and those who had monopolized its facilities had abused that information; a poignant example was the question of Palestine, of which a distorted or false image had been given for over 30 years, the media even having gone so far as to rationalize the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people by the Zionist aggressors. It sufficed to review major publications, newspapers, television broadcasts, news agencies' reports, etc., to see how biased and one-sided the reporting was, particularly where the news media of the United States were concerned. The information war launched by major communication agencies and networks had also been aimed at those international organizations and institutions which, and individuals who, had in some instances adopted positions of principle in support of his people's struggle. The campaign to discredit the United Nations and question its integrity and credibility had been stepped up since 1974, when the Palestine Liberation Organization had been given observer status in the United Nations. The same could be said with regard to the situation in southern Africa, where the peoples of Namibia and Zimbabwe and the blacks of South Africa had been depicted as the villains in the conflict.

45. In view of the biased and unjust manipulation of the current communication system, the United Nations information machinery had an invaluable role to play in compensating for the system's deficiencies, and the Palestine Liberation Organization therefore whole-heartedly supported the establishment of a new world information order.

(Mr. Rahman, Observer, PLO)

46. His organization believed that, in spite of the positive contributions made by the United Nations information system, there was still much room for improvement in the distribution and selection of the information it circulated. In that connexion, it should be pointed out that an article slandering a United Nations unit, written by elements hostile to that unit, had been published in a recent issue of the Secretariat News; such incidents must not recur.

47. In conclusion, he acknowledged the positive role played by the United Nations Arabic-language radio and television unit in familiarizing the Arab people with United Nations issues affecting their daily lives. However, that unit should be given greater attention and encouragement.

48. The CHAIRMAN reminded the Committee that the list of speakers on item 59 would be closed at the end of the current meeting.

49. Another draft resolution under item 57 had been received; it would be distributed under symbol A/SPC/35/L.19 and would be put to the vote at the afternoon meeting on Friday, 21 November.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.