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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
35th meeting
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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. KEKEH (Togo)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 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. Mrs. NOWOTNY (Austria) said that for three years the General Assembly had been conducting a comprehensive debate on questions relating to information, and the results of that debate could, on the whole, be considered constructive and useful. Not only had the significant role which information and communication played in the relations among States been emphasized, but the special responsibility of the United Nations in the field of information had also been highlighted. Furthermore, the debate on information questions had taken place against the background of the debate on economic development and the establishment of a new international economic order, and had thus gained a new and broader perspective. The Austrian Minister of Science and Research had stated at the twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO in Belgrade that economic development, if it was not to produce disruptions of unforeseen magnitude instead of bringing the benefits of material progress to full fruition, must be accompanied by a congruent cultural and educational development. In that respect, information and communication played an important role and could not be regarded as incidental services; on the contrary, their potential should warrant the formulation, particularly by the developing countries, of comprehensive communication policies. Her delegation welcomed the fact that a number of important steps had been taken in that direction, as reflected in the Declarations of San José, Kuala Lumpur and Yaoundé and in the deliberations and conclusions of the Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development and of the twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO. It also welcomed the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communications, which it saw as an effective way of tackling the problem.

2. In the course of the debate, the prevailing system of distribution of information had been subject to growing criticism. Distrust had been expressed of the doctrine of free flow of information, the argument being that it had only enabled major news agencies to impose their political beliefs and patterns of thinking on developing societies. Initial attention had been directed towards the imbalances in the flow of information between developed and developing countries. Her Government understood that concern and recognized the need to exchange the dependence of the developing countries in the field of information and

(Mrs. Nowotny, Austria)

communication for relationships based on interdependence and co-operation. As far as the share of the developing countries in the production and broadcasting of news was concerned, adjustments could be made through increased co-operation at the regional and interregional levels and through transfer of appropriate technology. Much could be gained from the training of journalists from developing countries, and full assistance should be given for that purpose through the creation or improvement of educational facilities and through a generous system of scholarships and grants. Austria had gained valuable and positive experience in both those fields.

3. In many cases, the justified criticism of the situation with regard to communications had been combined with an attack on the principles of freedom of information, freedom of opinion and freedom of expression. That line of reasoning was dangerously short-sighted and had to be countered in the strongest possible terms. Freedom of information and freedom of opinion were basic rights which included the freedom of the media in all its dimensions. That concept had evolved in an intellectual historical process and had been fought for in revolutions and struggles against the censorship of State and Church and against the concept of a controlled flow of information carefully selected by ruling minorities for consumption by the mass of the citizens. The enjoyment of those rights, which formed part of the fundamental principles of the Austrian Constitution, presupposed free access to all sources of information and the free and uninhibited flow and distribution of information. It would not be feasible or desirable to attempt a change of that concept; on the contrary, it was essential to bear in mind the extraordinary role which freedom of information and freedom of the media had played in creating and forming the societies of the pluralistic democracies, and every effort should be exerted to guarantee freedom of information.

4. With regard to the information activities of the United Nations, her delegation had some doubts about the usefulness and effectiveness of expanding the present short-wave broadcasts and about frequency modulation broadcasts in the Headquarters area. Those were recommendations which had considerable technical and financial implications and deserved further study. It might be more useful and more economical to supply radio stations in all parts of the world with scripts or talking points, on the basis of which they could produce and broadcast their own programmes. Her Government endorsed the recommendations concerning the training of journalists and broadcasting personnel, and was glad to learn from the Secretary-General's report (A/35/504) that it was intended to provide on-the-job training for broadcasters and training courses for journalists with professional experience.

5. The resolutions concerning public information adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session and the continuing requests from the Economic and Social Council and various subsidiary bodies emphasized the demand for modern information techniques in the field of electronic word processing and transmission of the printed word. The growing demand for public information highlighted the role of the Department of Public Information as a focal point for the co-ordination and implementation of the information activities of the United Nations. Her delegation considered the establishment of thematic task forces a valuable and innovative measure which would contribute to the streamlining of the Department's activities and to the enhancement of its effectiveness and efficiency.

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(Mrs. Nowotny, Austria)

In addition, interagency co-ordination was indispensable to avoid duplication and to project a unified image of the United Nations system and its common goals. Over the past 30 years, the features and functions of the United Nations had changed, requiring changes also in the concepts governing the dissemination of public information and in the methods used.

6. Mr. DIDIER (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Economic Community, reaffirmed the unswerving commitment of the Community to the principles of freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of information set forth in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Those were basic rights which must be kept in mind in the efforts to formulate and establish a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order aimed at strengthening international peace and understanding and based on the free flow and the widest and most balanced dissemination of information. With all due respect to the legitimate desire of every nation to preserve its cultural and social identity, the European Economic Community rejected any restriction of the free flow of information with a view to imposing State control on the media so as to meet the needs of Government propaganda.

7. With regard to the report of the Committee on Information (A/35/21) the European Economic Community was pleased to note that during the past year the Committee had endeavoured, through its Ad Hoc Working Group, to formulate specific recommendations to guide the activities of the Department of Public Information; however, some of the recommendations had not been considered in sufficient detail by the Committee and should be studied more thoroughly in the future. In view of the Department's limited budget, the substantial financial implications of some of the proposals in question should be carefully scrutinized before any priorities were set for activities and programmes. Obviously, as far as reviewing United Nations information policies and activities was concerned, the Committee on Information still had a great deal to do; however, it must be borne in mind that in order to avoid unnecessary duplication, any studies or activities which had been undertaken in other parts of the system should not be repeated in the Committee.

8. The delegations of the States members of EEC had listened with interest to the report of the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO on the twenty-first session of the General Conference and had noted that the process of formulating the basic principles for the new international information and communication order had begun. At that session of the General Conference, the States members of the Community had joined in the consensus on the resolution concerning the findings of the International Commission for the study on Communication Problems and the resolution concerning the establishment of an International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). They had also noted with satisfaction that those resolutions reaffirmed the fundamental principles relating to freedom of opinion, expression and information. ECE considered that IPDC met the practical material needs of the developing countries and would reduce the gap which existed in the communication field between those countries and the developed countries. ECE had repeatedly expressed its willingness to co-operate in the efforts to correct that imbalance, and the proposed programme constituted an important element for the establishment of a new international information and communication order.

9. Mr. TAREEN (Pakistan) gave an assurance that his delegation would fully support all moves to effect closer co-operation and greater co-ordination between UNESCO and the General Assembly with a view to achieving a new, more just and more effective world information order. All the documents before the Committee reflected a common desire to use the tremendous influence of mass communication on human minds for building a better, safer and happier world by promoting mutual trust and co-operation. His delegation's perception of a new world information order was very clear. It visualized an order in which the handling, treatment and dissemination of world information did not suffer from prejudices and lack of balance and objectivity. It visualized an order in which freedom of information was not mistaken for a licence either to denigrate what was not akin to the reporter's conceptions or to distort facts and project them out of context; an order in which information did not flow, as it did today, almost entirely in one direction but there was a two-way traffic of information between the developed and the developing countries.
10. His delegation believed that, in the new order, world information should serve the cause of development of human and material resources, particularly of the developing countries. The vast reservoir of knowledge that humanity had accumulated over the centuries must be put to productive use for the benefit of all and not be allowed to be monopolized by a few. Mass media could play an important role in breaking such monopolies wherever they existed and could help to create an atmosphere conducive to social change and socio-economic development. Experience had shown that the process of development in some cases was hampered by mental barriers created by ignorance; mass media could help to remove those barriers without upsetting the value structure of a given society.
11. His delegation supported the important recommendations in the report of the Committee on Information (A/35/21), including the one referring to the need to redress the present geographical imbalance in the staff of DPI, particularly at the higher levels. The objective conditions, socio-economic fabrics, values and needs of the developing countries were markedly different from those of the developed countries. His delegation believed that only people with genuine understanding of those differences could appreciate and satisfactorily cater to the special needs of the developing countries. It was conscious of the administrative difficulties involved but hoped that serious efforts would be made to overcome them.
12. Another recommendation that deserved support related to the development of mass media infrastructures in developing countries. The mass media, in many developing countries, fell short in performance because they had not yet attained the necessary level of development either in technology or in techniques of communication. The developing countries lacked the resources and expertise to solve that problem, and the Department of Public Information could therefore be of invaluable help. He hoped that the Department would strengthen its existing programmes and activities and strive to find new ways to enable the developing countries to share the benefits of the remarkable advances made in the field of mass communication technology. The Committee on Information also recommended the strengthening and updating of the regional structure of DPI's Radio Service. His delegation would like to draw attention in particular to the problems confronting the Asian Unit, which served 33 countries and about 2.5 billion people, or more than 55 per cent of the world population, with a staff of two professionals and one
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(Mr. Tareen, Pakistan)

secretary. Another problem undermining the efficiency of the Asian Unit and other units as well, was the excessive delay in the delivery and distribution of the programmes prepared by DPI.

13. With regard to United Nations information centres, he hoped that the suggestions of the Joint Inspection Unit contained in document A/34/379 and the recommendations of the Committee on Information on improving the performance of UNICs would receive full support from delegations. It was essential for the centres to plan their activities and to produce material according to the requirements of the areas of their jurisdiction. That should be the guiding principle not only for the UNICs, but also for other DPI services.

14. The Committee on Information had recommended the provision of adequate resources for the Department of Public Information to enable it to carry out its work. His delegation appreciated the point of view of those who wanted the Department to continue working within its present resources. However, as the Secretary-General had pointed out in his report (A/35/504), demands on the Department for more services were continually increasing. The Committee on Information had called for additional resources proportionate to the increase in United Nations programmes for which the Department was required to provide information support, and his delegation hoped that the Committee's realistic recommendation would receive the support it deserved. His delegation also supported the Secretary-General's proposal regarding the training of journalists and broadcasters as contained in document A/35/603 and believed that the number of trainees should be increased.

15. No one was unaware of the challenge posed to the Department of Public Information by the diversity of political systems, economic structures, levels of education, socio-cultural settings and intellectual climates of the Member States. None the less, the Department had met, and he hoped would continue to meet, that challenge with corresponding determination. The United Nations was the embodiment of the faith of millions of people across the globe in the ability of man to build and preserve a world for all to live in peace and honour. It was for DPI to convince people around the world that that faith was not displaced and was not going to be betrayed.

16. Mr. HOLAIS (Democratic Yemen) commended the report of the Committee on Information (A/31/21) and the report on co-operation and assistance in the application and improvement of national information and mass communication systems for social progress and development (A/35/362), and expressed appreciation of the efforts made by the Special Political Committee in the field of information. Nevertheless, there was still a certain amount of imbalance in that field and there were many negative aspects and limitations, particularly in the developing countries, which hindered the information activities of the United Nations specialized agencies. He emphasized that United Nations information activities must not be restricted to a certain number of countries but must cover different regions, particularly those which needed the information in order to be able to fulfil the historic responsibility incumbent on them and to implement the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the resolutions adopted by the Organization. There were cases in which public opinion did not assign due importance to the information activities of the United Nations, and that created a

(Mr. Holais, Democratic Yemen)

degree of apathy; it was necessary to increase United Nations activities in that field, as well as co-operation between the United Nations and UNESCO, at both the regional and the national levels.

17. The delegation of Democratic Yemen attached the highest importance to the establishment of the new international economic order which, in its opinion, was inseparable from the efforts to establish a new world information and communication order. It therefore supported the United Nations resolutions on that matter and welcomed the initiative of UNESCO which had laid down a set of principles for developing communication and ensuring the implementation of the new system on a democratic basis for the benefit of all peoples. Democratic Yemen had clearly stated its views on the subject in the documents of the non-aligned movement published at Colombo and in those of the Sixth Summit Conference held at Havana. It also attached the greatest importance to the 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 Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War. The establishment of a new world information and communication order would contribute to the struggle against imperialism, colonialism, racial discrimination, racism, zionism, under-development and tension and would promote peace and the social progress of independent peoples. His delegation was therefore opposed to any attempt by international imperialism and the centres of monopoly, in particular United States imperialism, to prevent the restructuring of relations in that connexion.

18. The imperialist Powers were seeking to maintain colonialist systems of information, which were detrimental to the interests of the majority of the world's peoples and prejudicial to friendly relations among States and peoples. That system monopolized the information market and propagated its expansionist objectives through the mass media in order to corrupt public opinion and interfere in the internal affairs of States. Every year, millions of books were published against freedom, progress and socialism, and in many countries there were radio and television stations and research centres directed against the national liberation movements. At the same time, there was an increase in the number of magazines and periodicals in which the capitalist countries merely widened the gap between those countries and the developing world. Given the importance of the mass media, many countries were struggling to free themselves from the imperialist communication and information forces.

19. The Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had celebrated its twentieth anniversary, and the new world system of information and communication was a just aspiration of the peoples who desired to establish the new order with a view to liberating themselves finally from imperialism in all its forms. The imperialists and their henchmen would continue to hamper that process, shielding themselves behind the so-called free exchange of ideas and information, and through the mass media they were trying to exercise an ideological influence over the people of the socialist countries. A similar problem existed in the relations between the democratic countries and the developing countries following the capitalist system of development. That expansionism, through the information media, was a new form of colonialism which must be resisted.

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(Mr. Holais, Democratic Yemen)

20. Basic freedom of information must not be a commercial activity, used as a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of peoples. The imperialist countries distorted the facts by spreading propaganda against the struggle of the world's peoples, because for them freedom meant monopoly. Those countries used the press to engage in war propaganda, in violation of the principles of the Charter, the sovereignty of States and international law, in many countries: for example, in Viet Nam, the socialist countries, the USSR, Cuba, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Democratic Yemen, other Arab countries and in particular Arab Palestine, the representative of which was the Palestine Liberation Organization, and many other countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

21. The efforts of Democratic Yemen in the information field were consistent with the principles of the United Nations: personal freedom and freedom of expression in all forms as well as freedom of scientific and cultural research, were guaranteed in the Constitution, and facilities were provided for exercising them. The information system in Democratic Yemen operated in accordance with the Constitution, which laid down that the State must abide by the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the principles of international law; it opposed imperialist oppression, condemned aggressiveness and supported the rights of peoples against racism and racial discrimination. Based on those constitutional principles, the information system of Democratic Yemen, to the extent of the modest means at its disposal, co-operated with the State, and in particular with the Journalists' Union of Democratic Yemen, with men of letters, artists and other eminent personalities. His Government believed that the information media, and the press in particular, could not stand aloof from the social, military, economic and political activity of the present-day world. Given the intensified struggle of the forces of progress, freedom, peace and socialism against the forces of imperialism colonialism, aggression and racism, information media, at various levels, also played an important role in creating an atmosphere conducive to the promotion of world peace and security, and to the fulfilment of the objectives of peaceful coexistence. The information media of the United Nations bore an enormous responsibility for the dissemination of the Organization's objectives of promoting peace, security, friendship among peoples and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

22. Despite the absence of political will on the part of the imperialist countries, Democratic Yemen would continue its resolute struggle to establish a new world information and communication order based on the aspirations of the majority of peoples.

23. Mr. BOLD (Mongolia) stressed the importance of information in the modern world, where there were more than 1,000 million radio receivers, more than 400 million television sets, more than 100 wire services, tens of millions of copies of magazines and periodicals in daily circulation, some 25,000 radio and television broadcasting stations, more than 4,000 films produced each year and where satellite communications reached more than 100 States. It was obvious that those media had an enormous influence on forming public opinion at the national and international level and created an environment which could be directed either towards peace, security, progress and the prosperity of the peoples, or towards international tension and the fomenting of hostility and mistrust among those peoples.

(Mr. Bold, Mongolia)

24. The current imbalance in information demanded that the international community should take effective steps to create a new information order that would be just. In that connexion, the Declaration by UNESCO on fundamental principles concerning the contribution of the mass media to the strengthening of peace and international understanding, to the promotion of human rights and to countering racism, apartheid and incitement to war was an important step in the right direction and enjoyed the support of the progressive international community. Unfortunately, its implementation had been hampered by the opposition of imperialist, neo-colonialist and reactionary forces. The disequilibrium of the information media, in other words, information imperialism, was all the more striking as most information activities in the West were in the hands of a small group of monopolists; thus, only four news agencies provided information to more than 110 countries at a rate of more than 4 million words a day. Each year United States television networks sold the equivalent of 180 hours of programming to more than 100 countries. The information flow from the capitalist countries to the third world was a hundred times greater than that in the opposite direction.
25. The Western information monopoly was marked by lack of objectivity, misinformation, sensationalism, and interference in the internal affairs of other countries; it was trying to provoke world hysteria, incite to war and step up the armaments race. The success of the national liberation struggles of peoples had brought about an intensification of hostile propaganda by the imperialist and neo-colonialist information media, as could be seen from their sustained campaign against the Soviet Union, Viet Nam and revolutionary Afghanistan, abetted by the Chinese hegemonists. The object of that propaganda was to persuade peoples that they must invest heavily in military expenditures; it was no longer aimed only at the people of the United States, but at the whole world community. The socialist countries, including Mongolia, opposed all attempts to increase international tension and to return to creating a cold war climate; on the contrary, they were trying to promote positive trends towards peace, disarmament and international security. Mongolia's position in regard to information had been defined on many occasions in various international bodies: the information system must be restructured on the basis of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in internal affairs and respect for the laws and customs of each country and for the ethics of information agencies and journalists, who must act with freedom and responsibility.
26. He appreciated the important role of UNESCO and agreed that the various United Nations agencies should try to eliminate inequality in the information sector. The time had come to bring some order into the information work of the United Nations system proper by effective supervision of the Department of Public Information. Mongolia was prepared to co-operate fully in the establishment of a new world information and communication order.
27. Mr. EL-SAID (Egypt) said that the matter of information had gained increasing importance in the past few years. Since the establishment of the United Nations, which had been conceived as a political organization to deal mainly with threats to international peace, it had been recognized that for the Organization to be universal and effective it had to be involved in a wide range of human activities,

(Mr. El-Said, Egypt)

as could be seen from the various provisions of the Charter. The trend to involve the United Nations in all dimensions of inter-State conduct had at one point aroused interest in examining ways and means of creating a new international information order to include the whole field of public information. The role of the United Nations in that respect could be considered from different viewpoints. The traditional approach was that the Department of Public Information should confine itself to publicizing the various United Nations activities among its Member States, but latterly many States, including Egypt had concluded that integrated and harmonized information policies geared to a better understanding of the information needs of developing countries should be adopted.

28. Despite the essential role played by information in international relations, the present international role of information showed a marked imbalance between developed and developing countries, due mainly to the fact that the developed countries enjoyed a technological supremacy and dominated the information fields in all respects: press agencies, radio and television, films, magazines, books and illustrated mass-circulation journals, data banks and advertising firms. The developing countries, including Egypt, believed that the United Nations and its specialized agencies should be the focal point for all international efforts to eliminate imbalances in communication and its structures, particularly in information flows. Such a new order implied a real readaptation in order to change an unjust situation, the product of a long history, which certainly could not be rectified and brought into balance quickly. However, a procedure should be started at the national, regional and international levels, and that required effective, concrete and harmonized action.

29. His delegation was deeply committed to the principle of freedom of information, believing it to be a fundamental human right, but, the principle must be recognized justly and equitably by all nations and not only the most developed. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was relevant in that connexion. It must at all times be borne in mind that information was a social need and not simply a merchandise. The hopes, worries and struggles of communities, groups and nations should be treated on an equal footing with complete honesty and objectivity; the Yaoundé Declaration of the African States members of UNESCO had made that point clear.

30. The establishment of a new world information order must be considered as a logical follow-up to the continuing efforts to establish a new international economic order. Egypt fully supported the resolutions of the twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO and in particular the resolution referring to initiating the necessary studies to define the concept of a new world information and communication order, and believed that significant elements of the order could be derived from the UNESCO Declaration on mass media and the recommendations of the intergovernmental conferences on communication policies in Yaoundé, Kuala Lumpur and San José. The recommendations of the report of the Committee on Information were a valuable basis for future work. His delegation hoped that the Special Political Committee would adopt by consensus the report and recommendations of the Committee on Information and urged that that Committee's mandate should be renewed.

(Mr. El-Said, Egypt)

31. The General Assembly, in its resolution 34/182, had put the relation between the United Nations and UNESCO with regard to information and communication in the right perspective. The United Nations was the political centre of the system, while UNESCO had an important part to play in information and mass communication. The common goal should be co-operation and not competition; the work should be complementary and not contradictory.

32. His delegation fully supported the reservations of the Department of Public Information regarding the fulfilment of its ever-increasing responsibilities and expressed gratitude to the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information for his efforts to revitalize the Department and enable it to carry out its responsibilities in the most efficient manner. However, since 1946, the share of the total regular budget devoted to public information activities had decreased by more than 50 per cent. His delegation strongly supported the call for providing the Department of Public Information with additional resources proportionate to the increase of all United Nations programmes involving the Department's participation.

33. The United Nations should open an information centre in Zimbabwe to enhance co-operation with that new nation. Finally, the Arabic services of the Department of Public Information should be strengthened in order to serve the legitimate information needs of the Arab peoples.

34. Mr. ANGUIANO (Mexico) said that every possible support should be given to the various United Nations organs to enable them to fulfil the task of establishing a new world information and communication order, as it constituted an important objective for modern society. At the twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO, recently held in Belgrade, a number of important advances had been made in that direction, including the endorsement of the report of the International Commission for the study of Communication Problems and the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communication and of the Intergovernmental Council which would co-ordinate the Programme's activities and was composed of 35 members, including Mexico. That had been a notable step forward in the search for new forms of bilateral, multilateral, public and private co-operation which, combined with the steps already taken, could lead to a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order.

35. Those new instruments would strengthen the United Nations system and enable more rational use to be made of available resources. In that connexion, there was a clear division of responsibilities as between, for instance, UNESCO and the United Nations Department of Public Information. UNESCO worked in the broad sphere of mass communication, whereas the United Nations Department of Public Information was responsible for showing world public opinion a true image of the United Nations, its principles and its efforts to preserve peace, reduce social and economic injustice and contribute to harmony among the peoples of the world. It was obvious that the 66-member Committee on Information and the 35-member Intergovernmental Council should necessarily complement each other.

36. There were two matters to which priority could be given in the information work of the United Nations Secretariat. One was the vital subject of disarmament.

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(Mr. Anquiano, Mexico)

It was urgent for public opinion to be informed and educated about the arms race, the need to reverse the process and the threat of a nuclear war. The United Nations should promote study and educational programmes on disarmament. In the First Committee his delegation had proposed organizing a world campaign for disarmament under the aegis of the United Nations. Another information campaign which the United Nations should conduct concerned the establishment of the new international economic order. All peoples should know that international economic co-operation entailed reciprocal commitments and that the entire international community benefited from it.

37. The efforts being made by the various bodies of the United Nations system should be directed towards substantially changing the aims and images which characterized the dominant information systems. Democratization of international life presupposed democratization of information; the egalitarian relationship among States should be founded on respect for the interests and characteristics of each nation; the establishment of a genuine community of nations called for genuine universal dialogue by means of communication.

38. Mr. SHAMMA (Jordan) said that information and mass communication had played a major role in shaping the present world of interdependence, and that the time had come for the United Nations to consider the possibility of drawing up guidelines for a code of ethics guaranteeing a responsible flow of information with freedom of expression as its hallmark. The previous three decades had witnessed political, economic and social changes in the world; in each of those three categories human values were involved, and such values should guide the flow of information in a free and responsible manner.

39. To achieve its major objectives, it was extremely important for the United Nations to mobilize public support, confidence and understanding the world over. No place in the world was as rich with information as the United Nations, since it reflected the events which occurred in the world and affected it. His delegation proposed that a study should be conducted on the feasibility of establishing a United Nations news agency to compensate for the current imbalance in the dissemination of information until the new world information order could be established. That idea would be resisted by those who considered that a United Nations news agency would break their monopoly on information. It was for the majority, the developing world, to meet that challenge.

40. The representative of Japan had noted that since 1946 the share of the regular budget devoted to public information activities had decreased by more than half, although the demand for such activities continued to expand. Some facts clamoured for attention. Thus, for instance, paragraph 19 of the Secretary-General's report (A/35/504), in dealing with the existing structure of the regional units within the Radio Service of DPI, made no mention of services in Arabic, which was the language of more than 100 million people living on two continents. It was not clear whether that omission was due to the inadequacy of resources or to an oversight in the restructuring of the services. In addition, there was an inequitable participation of personnel from the developing countries in the staff of the Department of Public Information, particularly in posts at the higher and decision-making levels.

(Mr. Shamma, Jordan)

General Assembly resolution 34/182 requested the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures immediately to ensure such equitable participation and should be implemented.

41. Mr. GAYAMA (Congo) said that the statements made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and the Assistant Director-General for Culture and Communication of UNESCO at the start of the Committee's review of questions relating to information had highlighted the complementary roles played by the United Nations and by UNESCO in that crucially important field. UNESCO deserved to be warmly commended for having made the establishment of a new world information order one of its major activities in recent times. Another step forward in that area was the International Programme for Development of Communication, the establishment of which had been recommended by the Intergovernmental Conference for co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development and had been confirmed by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-first session, recently held in Belgrade. The common aim of those efforts was to reduce the imbalances and inequities which characterized the present situation in the field of information and communication.

42. One of the principal aims of the Committee on Information was to assist the United Nations to make its work better known and to mobilize world public opinion in support of the organization's objectives. Improving the United Nations information system was one of the vital aspects of efforts to enable the Organization to fulfil its task of establishing a new and more just international order. It was those principles which guided his delegation's contribution to the work of the Committee on Information. Its active support for the work of the United Nations had been particularly marked in the field of decolonization and the struggle against apartheid. It had brought down on the Congo all manner of aggressive and coercive acts on the part of the colonial Powers, including South Africa, which had never concealed its intention of intervening to defend the sinister status quo in southern Africa. His delegation was therefore proud to assert that no form of pressure could induce the Congo to abandon its determination to promote and strengthen the ideals of international peace, harmony and understanding.

43. The Government of the Congo was pleased to reaffirm that it was ready to co-operate with the Department of Public Information to make the activities of the United Nations in every sphere better known. During the Second World War the radio station in what had then been Brazzaville had started to make world-wide short-wave broadcasts, and today there was nowhere in the world where they could not be received. The Congolese national radio proposed to take full advantage of that capability to maintain its position as an international radio station and to become a kind of retransmission station for United Nations broadcasts; it daily transmitted various kinds of United Nations programmes prepared in New York.

44. Turning to some aspects of the information services of the United Nations, he mentioned the problem of the geographical distribution of the staff of the Department of Public Information and stressed the importance of the recommendations on the matter made by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/182. As an indication of the present imbalance, the Joint Inspection Unit had observed in

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document A/34/379 that, of the 129 staff members in the Professional and higher categories at Headquarters, only 48 came from Asia, Africa and Latin America. That imbalance would be more acceptable if the staff members in the Department who came from the developed countries had the necessary professional training, but, as the Joint Inspection Unit had pointed out, only 10 of the 28 United Nations information centres were headed by staff members who had been specially trained for press, radio or television work; even in Geneva, some of the 16 Professional of the service had received no special technical training in communications.

45. Another example of imbalance could be found in the Radio Service, in which, according to available information, the African Unit consisted of only three staff members, together with two production assistants. That seemed a ridiculously small staff, given the fact that the Unit had to service more than 50 Member States using the English, French or Portuguese languages, not to mention the African languages. However, judging from the quality of the material that it produced, the African Unit deserved to be made into a full-fledged section to supervise all the radio and television productions intended for African stations. Efforts should also be made, with regard to the work of the Department, to ensure that African nationals had a greater say in decisions that directly affected African interests.

46. There also appeared to be a need for a European section in order to meet adequately the requirements of European radio and television stations; for example, it was known that no radio programmes in the French language were distributed to European stations. In that context, and given the inadequate broadcasting of United Nations programmes in Europe and North America, it was permissible to ask whether, in some regions of the world, there was not a rejection of all material referring to activities of the United Nations and its ideals of justice, peace and international co-operation. That seemed to be a reflection of the influence exerted by the powerful mass media of those continents, whose negative attitude towards the United Nations was well known. His delegation saw a similar attitude in the procedural difficulties that had arisen with regard to the request for frequency modulation in the United Nations Headquarters area. His delegation could not believe that there were insurmountable technical difficulties and was of the view that to subordinate the extraterritoriality of the United Nations to the jurisdiction of the host country would establish a dangerous precedent, in disregard of the provisions of duly signed agreements.

47. With regard to the budgetary restrictions being experienced by DPI, it was true that its budget should be increased, but at the same time more rational use should be made of existing resources. For example, it could be asked whether the fact that the Department had many staff members in high grades, some of them of questionable professional ability, represented an appropriate use of the budget. Another instance that could be cited was the fact that, while Geneva alone had consumed 7.6 per cent of the total budget of the Department in 1978-1979, almost no European station had received any material from that service, despite its situation in the centre of Europe and the presence among its staff of many high-level officials. While it might be utopian to imagine that some day European or American radio stations would wish to broadcast, for example, a special programme on the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggling People of South Africa, it was

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to be hoped at least that the United Nations would take better advantage of the goodwill of peoples and the ability of individuals particularly dedicated to the noble task of promoting the ideals and principles of the Charter. Those countries whose radio broadcasts competed in Africa, Asia and Latin America in the service of interests alien to those of international understanding could not try to silence the voice of the United Nations with flimsy arguments.

48. Mr. THUNBORG (Sweden) said that he wished to reiterate the position of his Government on the fundamental issues of information and communication, as stated by the Swedish Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs in the general debate at the twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO.

49. The mass media were important in shaping opinions, and his Government was convinced that a free press had played and would always play an essential role in Swedish society in furthering justice and social and cultural equality. It was his Government's belief, furthermore, that the free flow of information and free communication between different countries would contribute to better understanding between peoples. The imbalance in the news flow between countries had been criticized, along with the influence exerted by commercial interests, which could be extremely harmful; however, the situation could be improved by attempting to abolish the obstacles to the flow of information, both at the national and the international levels. The right to free expression should be granted to all, in particular to underprivileged groups; new technology made possible cheap and efficient means of communication in countries with inadequate infrastructures. Obstacles impeding the exercise of the freedom of expression should be abolished, be they legal, economic, social or cultural, because a society that did not permit criticism of its leadership became rigid and oppressive. Free debate and a well-informed public were needed to control and balance political, economic and other types of power and to promote development. Those principles should be applied to the world as a whole and to the activities of UNESCO and the United Nations in particular.

50. The information activities of international organizations should promote communication between individuals and countries and should therefore be based on the following considerations: (1) the flow of information should be free, in conformity with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1 of the Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO and the conclusions of the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (the McBride Commission); (2) censorship or arbitrary control of information should be abolished; (3) Governments should promote the free access of journalists to sources of information; (4) mass media should be truly independent of government interference as far as the content of the information that they disseminated was concerned; (5) the status of journalists should be strengthened and their working conditions should be improved, particularly through action initiated by the profession itself; (6) the international community should support developing countries in building up the infrastructure needed for a wide and more balanced flow of information - in that connexion he stressed the importance of the recently established International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC); (7) the programmes of international organizations in the communications and information field should be concentrated on the activities for which those

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organizations were best qualified and there should be a clear division of responsibilities between them, so that they could co-operate without duplication of work. In that connexion, he noted with satisfaction the establishment, under the aegis of ACC, of a Joint United Nations Information Committee to co-ordinate activities in different parts of the United Nations system.

51. His Government had participated in the consensus on General Assembly resolution 34/182, which had given the Committee on Information an enlarged mandate to promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information. His Government had been able to join the consensus on the basis of that clear statement in favour of the free circulation of information. However, it did have a deep understanding of the structural problems of the developing countries in the field of information and communication, and believed that the solution of that problem required that the poorer countries should be assisted in their endeavours by the international community. It was important that the developing countries should formulate their own communications policies in order to develop their infrastructure; and to do that they needed financial support. In some development institutions, such as UNDP, the developing countries themselves decided in which areas the assistance should be given. It had to be reiterated that efforts to establish a new world information and communication order could be successful only if that order was based on the clear acceptance of the freedom of information. It was the strong feeling of his Government that the time had come to concentrate on practical measures of assistance.

52. Mr. ABDULSAHIB (Iraq) said that in recent years the General Assembly had shown great interest in the item under consideration; and the Special Political Committee had discussed various topics relating to the mass media and United Nations activities in the field of information. That interest was a response to the existing situation in the world, which the developing countries wished to change so that it would take account of their legitimate and objective interests, as they had declared at various meetings, especially that of the movement of non-aligned countries at the United Nations.

53. General Assembly resolutions on the subject had highlighted the need for a new information order which would meet the requirements of all States, on an equal footing, and had pointed out the link between that order and the new international economic order, matters on which particular stress had been laid at the Havana summit meeting of non-aligned countries. The reports of the Committee on Information, the Secretary-General, and the Director-General of UNESCO confirmed that the information bodies of the United Nations did not reflect the needs of the developing countries, or protect their legitimate interests either. The previous year, his delegation had highlighted the short-comings of the existing information system, such as the monopoly exerted by the major news agencies, and the fact that the volume of information flowing from the developed countries to the developing countries was much greater than in the other direction.

54. In carrying out its information function, the United Nations should reflect the functions of the Organization itself, namely the maintenance of peace, respect

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(Mr. Abdulsahib, Iraq)

for human rights, decolonization, and the elimination of all forms of racism and apartheid. To do that, the United Nations should revitalize such activities both at Headquarters and at its information centres, and information should be disseminated in all the official languages, and efforts should be made to ensure a balanced linguistic distribution. The information furnished should highlight the changes required of the international community by virtue of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. It was regrettable that the United Nations information organs were under the control of the developed countries, especially the Western countries, and that the number of high-level posts occupied by Arab staff members was very small.

55. The United Nations information system should try to counteract racist trends by providing objective information, and draw attention to those practices of Member States which conflicted with the new information order. The mass media of the Zionist entity projected a false picture of the Arabs, fomenting racism and apartheid, distorting the history of the region, and of Palestine in particular, and thereby creating animosity among the people. For that reason both the General Assembly and UNESCO had condemned such practices, which would make the prospect of a new information order extremely remote unless they were eliminated.

56. He said that his delegation, like those of the other Arab countries, hoped that there would be a positive response to the call for the strengthening of DPI radio and television services in Arabic. He expressed gratitude for the praiseworthy efforts of the Committee on Information and of its Ad Hoc Working Group, and urged that the necessary measures to enhance its effectiveness should be taken.

57. Mr. MABILANGAN (Philippines) said that his Government attached particular importance to consideration of the problems of communication, and hoped that the declarations and resolutions adopted in the United Nations system and in UNESCO would enable the international community to remove the obstacles standing in the way of the early establishment of a new world information and communication order. He noted with regret, however, the existing imbalances in the flow of information, and subscribed to the view that freedom of information, while a valid concept, must be used responsibly. The new world order had to eliminate those imbalances, change the dependent status of the developing countries in that field, and guarantee them free access to information so as to ensure diversity in their sources of information. The new information order should also form an integral part of the international development process, and more particularly of the new international economic order.

58. His delegation noted with satisfaction the resolutions adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-first session held in Belgrade, in particular on the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, and on measures for implementing the 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 Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War.

(Mr. Mabilangan, Philippines)

59. UNESCO had a major role to play in the field of communication and information; the work of the Committee on Information and the United Nations Department of Public Information was equally important. For that reason, his delegation recognized the need to provide the Department of Public Information with additional resources. It also reaffirmed the need to maintain a linguistic balance in the dissemination of information by the United Nations and an equitable geographical distribution of personnel, particularly in posts at the senior and decision-making levels of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations.

60. His delegation believed that there was a clear need to strengthen the network of 60 United Nations information centres around the world. In addition, it noted with satisfaction the report of the Secretary-General on the programme of fellowships and scholarships for the training of journalists and broadcasting personnel from the developing countries, and agreed that the co-ordination and co-operation tasks of the Joint United Nations Information Committee were essential to the work of the United Nations system in the field of information and communication.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.