



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MATHIAS (Portugal)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

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1. Mr. SORENSEN-MOSQUERA (Venezuela) expressed Venezuela's interest in the pioneering work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the field of information and communications, and its support for UNESCO's position as the central agency for the study and treatment of those topics.

2. Despite the many studies of the question, agreement had not yet been reached on satisfactory definitions of the terms "communication" and "information", or on an adequate delimitation of the responsibilities of individuals, groups and the mass media in the systematic and scientific study of the subject. However, there was a measure of agreement on the urgent need to establish a new world information and communication order to redress the imbalances and injustices created by the existing structure of information systems. Without a new world information and communication order, it would be much more difficult to ensure the full establishment of the new international economic order, the strengthening of peace and the protection of human rights. Opponents of the new information order had made much of the fact that the nature of the desired order had not yet been precisely defined. It should be remembered, however, that although communication had existed as long as society, the scientific and systematic study of that discipline as such and of its interdisciplinary aspects was relatively recent.

3. So far more attention had been given to what the new order should not be, rather than to what it should be. However, 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, the publication of the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems and the adoption by consensus of the relevant resolutions at the recent UNESCO General Conference had greatly clarified the matter. At a time when action was becoming more important than reflection, his delegation welcomed the establishment by UNESCO of the International Programme for the Development of Communication and hoped that all States Members of the United Nations would contribute financially and technologically to the Programme's success.

(Mr. Sorensen-Ilosquera, Venezuela)

4. A matter so important as the new world information and communication order required the support of all agencies in the United Nations system, and also the co-operation of all Member States. Venezuela considered that UNESCO possessed the experience and the structure necessary to study and set in motion activities relating to the new order, and that it would be wasteful and impractical to duplicate UNESCO's efforts. At the same time, his delegation recognized the fundamental role of the General Assembly in that respect and the vital need for close co-operation between the various institutions of the United Nations system. It also recognized that it was for the United Nations Department of Public Information, with the co-operation of the Committee on Information, to co-ordinate the activities of the system connected with the press and the dissemination of information.
5. Venezuela had always been an ardent champion of the freedom of expression and information as one of the basic human rights, and it considered that that freedom should form an integral part of the right to information, which included not only freedom to inform and to be informed but also the right of access to communications media on a democratic basis, as well as the right of access to sources of information and the protection and inviolability of information sources, which should be as varied as possible. The influence of mass information media in the modern world and the identity of those responsible for their content were only too well known. It was therefore particularly important that the fundamental rights and freedoms should be strengthened and defended and that they should entail an equal element of responsibility. Information was not merchandise but a social asset; and its formative and cohesive function in any society, whatever its ideology, implied a very serious responsibility which must be constantly reconsidered and redefined.
6. His delegation fully supported all proposals designed to improve the efficiency of the public information machinery in the United Nations system, but felt that increased resources should be allocated to the Department of Public Information, which was being asked to undertake new and complicated tasks in too many areas. The Committee on Information should also co-operate more effectively with the Department in establishing priorities in the light of the cost-effectiveness of the proposed activities. The Department's activities could in general be classified under two major short-term and medium-term objectives. The first was to establish a better geographical balance in the regular staff of the Department and in the creation of information centres and other dissemination machinery, in order to increase the effective participation of developing countries in the public information policies and activities of the United Nations. The second objective was to improve and increase the dissemination of information concerning the principles, ideas and activities of the United Nations, and to co-ordinate the public information activities of the various agencies. Obviously, those objectives could be attained only in the context of the need to establish a more just and more effective world information and communication order. It was also clear that the gradual attainment of both objectives would make the best and most practical contribution to the establishment of that new order and consequently to the strengthening of peace in the world and the protection of fundamental human rights. With regard to equitable geographical balance, his delegation

(Mr. Sorensen-Mosquera, Venezuela)

agreed with the Secretary-General that the process was slow and hence there was a need for patience (A/35/504, para. 12). However, patience had its limits, and the Secretariat should adopt a much more aggressive, dynamic attitude to correct the imbalance noted by the Committee on Information.

7. The training of journalists and broadcasting personnel, which called for greater dedication and resources because of its immense potential multiplying effect, also came under the context of the first objective, as did - at least partially - the establishment of information centres and the designation of their directors.

8. With regard to the second objective, there was a basic structural problem which must be tackled. The United Nations public information services had been created with a well-defined orientation which responded to the needs and realities of the mass information media of the industrialized countries and continued to serve them reasonably effectively. What was required now was not merely an improvement in press releases and the use of more effective modern technology - although both were necessary, and perhaps indispensable - but a radically different and more imaginative approach to information. The mass media in the industrialized countries had adequate human and economic resources to give full coverage to all the activities of the United Nations; and the fact that that coverage was not entirely satisfactory was yet another argument for the need for a new world information and communication order.

9. A greater effort should be made to ensure that the third world itself received information from the United Nations. In that connexion, greater emphasis should be given to the insertion of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, the Pan-African News Agency and other regional agencies in the Organization's dissemination system; but that was only a small part of the work to be done at the present time. The use of new technology was of little value when the aim was to provide precise information rapidly to editors whose technical and financial conditions were precarious. He hoped that the day would come when that new technology could be used by the developing world, but at present it was more important for the United Nations to concentrate on the establishment of less advanced but perhaps more effective channels of communication while UNESCO's recently established International Programme for the Development of Communication fulfilled its mandate of creating suitable infrastructures.

10. In any case, that would obviously require increased resources. Consequently, his delegation had doubts about the utility of projects such as frequency modulation broadcasts in the headquarters area, and the preparation of studies and reports focusing on various aspects of information and international relations, which was listed as a specific task of the Department (A/35/504, para. 7 (b)). Not only had UNESCO a broad mandate in that respect but also several non-governmental and academic organizations inside and outside universities had spent years on such studies, of which there had been a veritable explosion over the past few years. It would be more rational and efficient for DPI and the Committee on Information to concentrate on a search for practical solutions to the vast problems confronting them, thus avoiding any duplication of effort.

(Mr. Sorensen-Mosquera, Venezuela)

11. The work of the various United Nations institutions should be complementary. The new world information and communication order was urgently needed both by the third world countries and by the industrialized countries. All must work equally hard to achieve it, without any bureaucratic or academic rivalry.

12. Mr. HUTCHENS (Australia) said that his country was not a member of the Committee on Information but intended to attend its future meetings as an observer. That was an indication of the importance Australia attached to the Committee's discussions.

13. The relationship between freedom of the press and press responsibility had first been raised by the representative of the Soviet Union in a highly propagandist manner which brooked neither debate nor alternative view. The Australian delegation rejected the views then expressed and regretted the manner in which they had been stated. Australia was committed to the concept and practice of freedom of the press. A free press was not a licence to irresponsibility but an essential condition for the exercise of genuine freedom. Freedom of thought and expression and the unfettered circulation of news and ideas were fundamental human rights which must be kept in the forefront of any consideration of the development of a new and more just world information and communication order. His delegation was committed to the implementation of that new order and shared the view that it was important to proceed only by consensus. Australia would support only those proposals and activities which in no way eroded the principles of freedom of the press and the free flow of information.

14. The discussions on information and communication questions had been especially important during the current year because of the Twenty-first UNESCO General Conference at Belgrade. The debate on the new order should be conducted as far as possible in that organization but UNESCO should not have the sole responsibility for implementing the order. His delegation welcomed the emphasis given at Belgrade to co-operation among United Nations agencies, and it was clear that the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) had a very important role to play. Satisfactory co-ordination of activities among different international agencies was essential in order to avoid duplication. Co-ordination with some aspects of the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space should not be overlooked. The co-ordinating role of the Joint United Nations Information Committee was important, and his delegation hoped that that Committee would play a more active role in reviewing the information activities of the specialized agencies.

15. Australia did not see any reason to review the mandate of the Committee on Information set forth in General Assembly resolution 34/182 upon which a consensus had been reached after detailed negotiations; and it continued to support that mandate. At the same time, it believed that in 1981 the Committee should concentrate on the public information programme of the United Nations.

16. Australia had been greatly impressed by the work of the United Nations Information Centre at Sydney, which was an effective instrument for the promotion of United Nations work in that part of the world. However, although the number of member States in the South Pacific area had risen dramatically in recent years,

(Mr. Hutchens, Australia)

not enough was known of the work of the United Nations in that region and neither the United Nations nor the Department of Public Information knew enough about the region. His delegation therefore suggested that consideration should be given to increasing the Department's activities in the South Pacific to improve the area's awareness of United Nations activities of relevance to its inhabitants.

17. His delegation attached great importance to the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/30 on the development of public information activities in the field of human rights, and was pleased with the way in which the Department of Public Information had so far tackled that challenge. Promotion of United Nations work in that field could be of direct benefit to people, and could also enhance the reputation of the Organization. His delegation would also be most interested in the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights on the implementation of paragraph 3 of Council resolution 1980/30.

18. Australia had taken a keen interest in communications issues in the Commonwealth forum; and at the Conference of Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1979 it had initiated a proposal for the establishment of a Commonwealth Committee on Communications and the Media to study communications and media problems, with particular reference to the needs of developing countries, as a basis for identifying communications priorities and suitable forms of Commonwealth co-operation to meet those problems. It had also proposed increased exchanges of media personnel between Commonwealth members and had offered to provide \$A 75,000 to support such exchanges. The report of that Committee would be considered by the meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1981.

19. Australia would continue to provide assistance to developing countries to meet their communications needs within the usual provisions of its development aid programme. It recognized that communications development was one of many competing needs and that it was the responsibility and right of individual countries to order their development priorities as they saw fit. In that connexion, it would watch with great interest the progress of the International Programme for the Development of Communication recently established by UNESCO.

20. Mr. ZSOHÁR (Hungary) said that at a time when Western reactionary circles were seeking to undermine the policy of détente, it was necessary to reaffirm the continuing validity of the resolution adopted by UNESCO at its Paris Conference in 1978, stating that the strengthening of peace and international understanding, the promotion of human rights and the countering of racialism, apartheid and incitement to war demanded a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information and that the mass media had an important role to play in that regard. He expressed satisfaction at the results achieved at the Belgrade Conference of UNESCO, which had confirmed those principles.

21. Hungary was doing its utmost to contribute to the realization of objective and responsible mass communications in accordance with its foreign policy, which was guided by the basic principles of peaceful co-existence, non-interference in internal affairs, and the struggle for peace. His Government, therefore, condemned any attempt to invoke freedom of the press to justify interference in the internal

(Mr. Zsohár, Hungary)

affairs of other States and create tension in inter-State relations. In accordance with its socialist principles, Hungary had prohibited war propaganda, the advocacy of racial hatred and any attempts to instigate discord between nationalities.

22. All mass communication media must serve social progress. His Government closely followed the work carried out within the United Nations system to bring about a new, just world information and communication order, and it agreed that the United Nations must use the means at its disposal to prevent mass media from fomenting tensions, spreading false information and engaging in propaganda for war and racial hatred. At the present time, the mass media of certain Western countries invoked the freedom of the press to attack socialist countries, because they considered that freedom to be an appropriate weapon in the ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism. The publication of false information was a violation of the freedom of the press. The prevailing monopoly of the mass communication media ran counter to the interests of peoples. A proper system for disseminating information could not be achieved as long as mass communications were monopolized by international corporations and the large Western news agencies.

23. The establishment of a new and just information and communication order was of extreme importance both to the socialist and to the developing countries as an effective tool in a struggle against backwardness, colonialism and imperialism. Such a system should be based on the Charter of the United Nations and the general principles of international law and equality among nations. His Government attached great importance to the work carried out within the framework of UNESCO to bring about the new order and to elaborate principles governing its activities. Hungary was ready to play an active role in the elaboration of such a system and would continue to support any positive initiative for accomplishing that task within the framework of the United Nations.

24. Mr. SOKALSKI (Poland) said that in the past two years the significance of the subject of information in the Special Political Committee had transcended the limited concept of dealing with matters relating to public information. The Committee on Information was a regular subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, with all the implications that entailed. One of them was the need to determine the extent to which its terms of reference should cover matters other than those directly pertaining to the work and functioning of the Department of Public Information and certain specialized agencies within the United Nations.

25. In his opinion, the Committee on Information should deal with all aspects of questions relating to information. The next step was to seek agreement on the question of the new world information order. Although his delegation had no difficulty in joining a consensus on that question, it had serious doubts with respect to the definition contained in paragraph 26 of the report of the Committee to the effect that the new world information and communication order should be understood as a just means of freeing developing countries from their current dependence with respect to infrastructure, know-how and technology relating to information techniques and enabling them to gain complete mastery of those techniques. That definition oversimplified the concept of the new world information order and ignored the need for changes which would affect all countries, not only developing countries, and also the need to elaborate a set of sound and generally recognized principles to effectively enhance international understanding.

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(Mr. Sokalski Poland)

26. In that regard, his delegation expressed satisfaction at the recent statement made by the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, and especially his reference to the need to answer the "big questions" relating to conceptual, theoretical and policy-oriented issues. Among the factors adding to the complexity of public information problems, mention had been made of the so-called East-West nexus. The issue of press freedom versus press responsibility had been invoked in the Committee's discussions. His Delegation did not accept that formulation since freedom and responsibility were indivisible, and freedom of the press was not a fixed and isolated value, but varied according to the social context. Modern information media could facilitate thought and discussion and could also stifle them; they could promote the progress of civilization or thwart it. The right of the information media to free expression must be based on the duty to serve the common good. The precept of the indivisibility of media freedom and responsibility implied that the media must be accountable to society for meeting public needs and safeguarding the rights of citizens.

27. The role of public information in international relations was only part of the vast problem of information media. If nations were to survive they must cultivate self-restraint, moderation and mutual understanding. Adequate and reliable information was not only essential for promoting goodwill between Governments and peoples and breaking down artificial barriers created by prejudice and discrimination; it was the very key to communication. Unfortunately the current situation in the field of information had given rise to many negative phenomena throughout the world. In the past year, certain sections of world news media had totally disregarded the most pressing issues of the time - peace, détente, disarmament and genuine development. Radio stations in certain countries beamed programmes to other lands spreading prejudice and ill will to the detriment of international relations. It was a sad irony that certain parties to the 1936 International Convention Concerning the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace had engaged in hostile radio propaganda. Measures should be taken to ensure that the information media disseminated accurate news and refrained from any activities designed to promote feelings of hatred between peoples or incite aggression.

28. In the search for new solutions, delusive simplifications should be avoided, particularly those which presented the problem as defending the choice between media responsibility, falsely conceived as government control, and uncontrolled media freedom as the principal safeguard against Government interference and censorship. Such an approach was altogether misleading. The organic link between those two concepts was neither freedom nor responsibility per se but the feedback relationship between the ways in which each of them was exercised. In international relations and in the process of fostering friendly relations among States, the net result of that relationship was called fairness. In recent years, the international community had sought to elaborate generally acceptable and workable principles to govern action for world peace through information. Like all international agreements, those formulas would have to be based on a common denominator of the respective philosophies and approaches. For that reason, in spite of certain reservations, his delegation believed that the UNESCO Declaration on fundamental principles concerning the contribution of the mass media to

(Mr. Sobalski, Poland)

strengthening peace and international understanding, to the promotion of human rights and to countering racialism, apartheid and incitement to war was a milestone on the road to achieving such an agreement. UNESCO's central role in that process was undisputed. The uniqueness of UNESCO stemmed from the many disciplines within its well-established terms of reference. In the same vein his delegation welcomed the important information and communication component of the resolution on UNESCO's contribution to the preparation of societies for life in peace, which had been adopted at Belgrade at the twenty-first session of the General Conference.

29. With respect to issues relating to practical United Nations information activities, his delegation expressed its satisfaction at the statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information regarding his determination to instil greater efficiency and co-operation into the work of DPI and to re-examine its structure. It was to be hoped that that effort would bring about reform and change. In general, the Polish delegation supported the priorities and programmes of United Nations public information policies and activities as specified in the report of the Committee on Information. However, neither DPI nor any United Nations agency could be expected to replace the decisive role of national opinion-makers in promoting a proper image and perception of the United Nations.

30. That question should also be viewed in the context of so-called inadequacy of resources and the pressing need for economy. In the case of United Nations information activities, greater efficiency and effectiveness did not necessarily require additional resources, especially since the utilization of available funds could be further improved. It was unreasonable to embark on expensive projects like new United Nations short wave and FM broadcasts in the Headquarters area, since such activities had no real long-term advantages. He agreed that savings could be achieved through a co-ordinated effort in the Joint United Nations Information Committee. JUNIC, however, must to a greater extent be made accountable to an organ of the General Assembly, such as the Committee on Information.

31. He reiterated his delegation's position that efforts should be taken to introduce geographical balance in the composition of JUNIC. Much remained to be done, also, in applying the principle of equitable geographic representation to the staff of the United Nations information services, including the professional staff assigned to information centres and, especially, their directors, who were rarely recruited from the socialist countries. He regretted that, in reply to the general concern of Member States over the mass circulation - all over United Nations premises - of outside publications misinterpreting United Nations activities and containing articles hostile to Member States, senior officials of the Secretariat had offered the evasive explanation that such material was not made available officially, but was placed on the Volunteers' Desk on the fourth floor of the Secretariat building.

32. Lastly, he stressed that those who obstructed the process of détente were also obstructing efforts to institute a free circulation and balanced dissemination of information, which could only be achieved in an atmosphere of international rapprochement.

33. Mr. MOUTARI (Niger) said that at a time when the Special Political Committee was discussing questions relating to information for the third time since 1978, it was encouraging to note that while the concept of a new world information and communication order had not yet been unanimously accepted, at least its outlines and constituent elements were becoming clearer. The positions of different countries on the matter were known and had recently been skilfully summarized by the representative of Singapore. There had been extensive debates on the subject in various international meetings at the regional and world level, such as the three most recent summit conferences of Heads of State and Governments of the Non-Aligned Countries, the three regional conferences organized by UNESCO on communication policies in Latin America, Asia and Africa and, in particular, the Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development which had laid the foundation for the adoption by the recent twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO of the International Programme for the Development of Communication.

34. The pioneering role played by UNESCO in that field should be commended. The report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems was a major contribution to the study of information and communication problems and to the attempt to establish a new world information and communication order. The global approach which the report adopted to the problem of communication was particularly felicitous, all the more so since it coincided with the views of numerous developing countries.

35. Niger had always linked the problem of information and communication with the over-all problem of development. That was natural for a vast country with a low population density - a country which was completely land-locked, newly independent and suffering from the constraints of world communications structures and from the serious imbalance in the flow of news information in the world.

36. Niger's five-year economic and social development plan (1979-1983) described in detail the present situation and the long-term and short-term objectives of its information and communication policy. The general task assigned to information media in Niger was to inform, motivate and educate the population and to contribute to the re-enhancement of the national culture and the strengthening of national unity, since his country was deeply convinced that it was necessary to mobilize all its material and human resources with a view to establishing a society which could guarantee to its people the conditions essential for their full development. Mobilization of material and human resources was necessary also at the international level in order to promote peace, understanding and harmony between peoples and the struggle against racism and apartheid. Those resources should be placed at the service of the ideals of the United Nations, so that world unity could be achieved in spite of, even because of, the many different voices which would make themselves heard. The large measure of agreement already achieved at the UNESCO meetings, and at those of the Committee on Information, showed that in spite of genuine philosophical controversies, it was still possible to hope. The adoption of the United Nations Charter itself had given the lie to those who persisted in believing that States could only be "cold monsters" insensitive to appeals for solidarity. The establishment of a new world information order was a concrete expression of the determination affirmed in the Charter to "promote social

(Mr. Moutari Higer)

progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. That task was incumbent upon all and Higer would spare no effort in helping to accomplish it.

37. Mr. ABDULAH (Trinidad and Tobago) said that over the past year there had been growing signs of recognition of the need for fundamental changes in the international information system. Thus, the recent General Conference of UNESCO had taken the first steps towards the establishment of a new world information and communication order with the aim of promoting a wider and better balanced dissemination of information. While it was still necessary to define clearly the concept of a new world information and communication order, the UNESCO resolution was a landmark event, since it identified some of the main components on which the order could be based. His Government recognized that a free and responsible press was an essential feature of a democratic society. Each State, however, had the right to determine its own national priorities based on acceptable international standards. Any attempts, therefore, by national or transnational entities to subvert those priorities or derogate from those standards must be vigorously resisted. His delegation noted that those views were reflected in the elements identified in the UNESCO resolution as necessary to the establishment of a new information and communication order.

38. Another important recommendation of the General Conference related to the International Programme for the Development of Communication recommended by the Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development. The suggested principles and main objectives of the Programme would do much to redress the imbalances in the present system of information flows.

39. With respect to the report of the Secretary-General (A/35/504) closer attention should be given to the question of redressing the present geographical imbalance of staff, particularly in posts at the higher and decision-making levels of the Department of Public Information. While recognizing the need for patience in that matter, his Delegation felt that staff morale would inevitably suffer if promotion was to depend entirely on the rate of attrition. With respect to the review of the distribution of regional units within the Radio Service that was being undertaken, he reiterated his Government's view that the number of newly independent States from the Caribbean area and the continuing responsibility of the United Nations for the non-independent Territories justified the creation of a Caribbean radio service unit separate from the present North American unit. That unit could also assume eventual responsibility for the Dutch- and French-speaking territories in the area. His delegation, therefore, felt that a specific proposal on that matter should be included in the resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly at the current session. He welcomed the statement of the Secretary-General concerning the submission of specific proposals regarding the programmes for the training of journalists and broadcasting personnel and looked forward to the establishment of the training programme, which would contribute to the strengthening of media personnel in developing countries. His delegation stressed the need for an early review of the functions and role of the United Nations information centres as outlined in the report of the Committee on Information (A/35/21). As one of their main tasks, those centres should provide the Department

(Mr. Abdulah, Trinidad and Tobago)

of Public Information with constant feedback to enable it to fulfil its mandate, particularly in the light of the priorities established by the Committee and the need to promote the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

40. Mr. DAHAL (Nepal) noted that the item under consideration was one on which all States Members of the United Nations came the closest to reaching a consensus: all had supported the implementation of the programme for information and communication development, the consolidation of United Nations information activities and the establishment of a new, more just and more effective information and communication order. His delegation welcomed the success achieved in that connexion through the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and of other organs and agencies in the United Nations system. Accordingly, he wished to pay a tribute to all those responsible for that success and in particular to UNESCO for the central role it had played in bringing the question of information to national and international attention and for the valuable assistance it had rendered the developing countries.

41. His Delegation strongly supported current efforts to achieve co-ordination and co-operation between the different United Nations bodies working in the field of information. Such efforts should be continued with a view to avoiding duplication and waste to the utmost, while concentrating resources on the dissemination of information. His delegation also supported the view that the Development Forum should continue to be published (A/35/21, annex, para. 77 (1) (g)), as well as the recommendation that the United Nations should obtain its own short-wave frequencies and establish its own international short-wave broadcasting system as soon as possible (annex, para. 77 (4)).

42. His delegation wished to thank all those countries and United Nations agencies that had provided facilities for the training of personnel from the developing countries, although such facilities fell short of their growing requirements. He suggested that such assistance should be directed towards the establishment of basic information infrastructures, which the developing countries greatly needed in order to expand their information and communication systems and to achieve self-reliance in that field. In that connexion, he emphasized the importance of training professionals, who would serve as teachers and would help in establishing national units for the production of the necessary materials, as well as the importance of setting up training centres and institutions suited to the needs of the developing countries. With regard to the implementation of an international programme of assistance for communication development, his delegation supported the establishment of an international fund for that purpose.

43. Despite the useful work carried out by the United Nations information centres his delegation felt that a great deal remained to be done in order to bring the messages of the United Nations to local communities, especially in the developing countries. In that connexion, he said his delegation was in favour of the establishment of information centres in all the capitals of Member States and of the production of films and books in national languages and the organization of local discussion groups. Such measures could also offer an effective way of countering propaganda designed to damage the United Nations.

(Mr. Dahal, Nepal)

44. His delegation had noted with satisfaction that some important Asian languages were being used in the Asian Unit of the Radio Service of DPI (A/35/504, para. 19 (b)), but he regretted the fact that the Nepali language was not one of them. The taped programme broadcast over Radio Nepal was in English and therefore reached less than 1 per cent of the population of Nepal. Nepali had been the official national language of Nepal for more than 200 years and was used in education, in the judiciary, in the legislature, in the mass media and in public meetings. Moreover, it was one of the official languages of some north-eastern Indian States and was spoken by certain ethnic groups in Bhutan and Burma. Accordingly, his delegation requested that the Secretary-General should give urgent consideration to the inclusion of Nepali among the languages used by the Asian unit.

45. In view of the very wide gap between the information infrastructures and capabilities of the developed and the developing countries, it was satisfying to note the developed countries' willingness to assist the developing countries in building their own information and communication infrastructures and thus in achieving a freer, wider and more balanced dissemination of information. In that context, his delegation wished to draw attention to the gap that also existed in the information infrastructures of the developing countries themselves. Moreover, the lack of resources and of adequate technical manpower and know-how in the least developed countries, which included Nepal, imposed serious limitations on their efforts in that direction. Accordingly, with a view to providing a basic communication network throughout the country, the Government of Nepal was taking steps to establish postal services, microwave telephone systems, and radio and wireless links within the country and to provide teleprinter services for newspapers. However, development in that sector was closely connected to the over all social, cultural and economic development of the country and entailed huge financial, human and technological resources. Therefore, his delegation appealed to DPI, UNESCO and other specialized agencies as well as to individual countries to give top priority to the least developed countries in their programmes of assistance in that field. The objective of establishing a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order could not be achieved so long as the special problems of the small, poor countries were ignored.

46. His delegation fully supported the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group contained in paragraphs 76 and 77 of the annex of the report of the Committee on Information (A/35/21). In the current world situation, which was characterized by international security based on a delicate balance of nuclear weapons and by the contradictions created by an ideological bipolar power structure, reinforced by the emergence of small, regional powers, the national interests of the powerful States did not generally coincide with those of the smaller, weaker States. As a result, it was becoming increasingly difficult for the national communication media of the smaller countries to make their independent viewpoints known to the world public. For those countries, which included Nepal, the United Nations represented hope for their survival, for the protection of their national independence and sovereignty and for their over-all

(Mr. Dabhal (Nepal))

development. The deep faith such countries had in the purposes and principles of the United Nations was symbolized by their active pursuit of a non-aligned foreign policy and in their inclusion of the United Nations as a compulsory subject in the curricula of both lower and higher education. Wide dissemination of information on the United Nations would considerably help to strengthen international goodwill and thus to strengthen international peace and security.

47. Although his delegation considered the question of the free flow of information to be of great importance, it also believed that small, weak countries should not be subjected to social and cultural invasions by powerful foreign media in the name of the free flow of information. The problem faced by the developing countries in general and by the least developed countries in particular was to achieve over-all development while preserving their indigenous national culture and values. Modern means of information could be used effectively to enrich the traditional culture and values and to give dynamism to development efforts. However, the absence of just such a delicate balance would surely result in the mental colonization of the weaker by the stronger; in that connexion, the monopoly of modern means of communication was a major factor in the existing imbalances. Accordingly, respect for the free flow of information with a view to promoting cross-cultural interdependence and the growth of international understanding, goodwill and tolerance were prerequisites for a just and balanced international information order.

48. In conclusion, his delegation welcomed the final report of the Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development (A/35/362, para. 4) and the very important resolutions adopted by the UNESCO General Conference during its twenty-first session (A/35/362/Add.1, annexes I and II). Those resolutions, if properly implemented, would go a long way towards establishing a new, more just and more effective international information and communication order.

49. Mr. ADKHAH (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed the conviction of his delegation that the deliberations of the Committee on Information had been fruitful and had reflected general agreement on the need to establish a new world information order aimed at strengthening international peace and mutual understanding based upon a free and balanced exchange of information. The report of the Committee contained an extensive presentation of the concerns of the developing countries on questions of information, and his delegation reaffirmed its full support for those positions. The interest of the developing countries in the matter was reflected in their interest in international peace and security which was all the keener because of the vulnerability of their economic and developmental situation to international crises. His delegation was convinced of the close connexion between the new world economic order and the new information order.

50. The information media in the industrialized countries were still averse to playing their part in informing public opinion in the developed countries of the merits of the new world economic order and the new world information order so as

(Mr. Adhami, Syrian Arab Republic)

to prepare those societies to take part in their establishment. Those media were still promoting war and creating tension, scepticism concerning the developing countries and denigrating their civilizations, ideals and values. They were creating a suitable climate for the escalation of attacks upon developing countries, the entrenchment of the colonialist presence in them and the perpetuation of elements of the old economic order based upon exploitation, domination and the narrow egotistical interests of the great Powers. Whenever the developing countries expressed their dissatisfaction with the policies and practices of the Western information media, they were constantly told that they did not understand the difference between free and independent media and Governments which could not be considered responsible for the practices of such media. Information was a facade which concealed an ideological position: it was a mask worn by the imperialists while egging on their armies to attack third world countries and ensure domination over them. Through information, the imperialists created a climate in which their interference came to seem natural in the protection of so-called interests. The negative and hostile attitudes towards the interests of the peoples of the developing countries on the part of Western information media were primarily responsible for an organized attempt to mobilize public opinion in support of policies of hostility and confrontation, as a consequence of which Governments became obliged to implement those policies in the name of 'democratic exigencies' in those countries. The Western Governments could not disavow the evil effects which negative publicity could have upon their positions, relations and policies since they must ultimately be held responsible for those policies. In an interdependent world striving for peace and mutual understanding, and in an era in which a sense of justice towards all peoples had developed, it was not possible to allow the doctrine of the independence and freedom of information to become an instrument for the destruction of trust between peoples, for the abuse of their dignity or the denial of their fundamental rights. Even if the Governments of the advanced countries were not in a position to interfere in the policies of the media in practice, it was open to question as to what efforts they would make to rectify the negative effects arising from those policies in the light of their national and international responsibilities. The peoples of the world lived together on earth as though in a single ship braving the ocean, surviving together or perishing together.

51. Syria, together with the other developing countries, was particularly concerned with the equitable geographical distribution of the staff of the Department of Public Information in accordance with Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations and accorded that subject first priority. The response on that subject in paragraph 12 in the report of the Secretary-General (A/35/504) was unsatisfactory, and he expressed the hope that DPI would abandon its present attitude to the problem and adopt a more effective and more serious approach. Such a balance was necessary in the context of the efforts to establish a new world information order. On many occasions the media of the United Nations had been used for propaganda purposes in violation of the principles and purposes of the Charter relating to the strengthening of international peace and mutual understanding. That indicated that a number of officials from the advanced countries had been unable to free themselves from their ideological background

(Mr. Adhawi, Syrian Arab Republic)

or to adapt to the new concepts of information of which the United Nations had become the best proponent. Those matters were not part of the general policy of DPI but, in spite of its efforts to give expression to the will of the international community, those efforts remained limited. The international information media should be more faithful to the principles and purposes of the Charter and more truly representative of the will of the international community.

52. His Delegation shared the opinion of other delegations that the role of other agencies of the United Nations system should be complementary and that they should all work together for the establishment of a new world information and communication order. The central role of UNESCO in the field of information was incontrovertible. The principles of co-operation and co-ordination should guide work in all spheres. UNESCO had already made considerable progress towards the establishment of a new information order, but duplication, repetition and incompatibility must be avoided. DPI should be provided with the additional resources necessary for it to carry the additional burdens. His delegation, nevertheless, supported the remarks made by the representative of Singapore concerning the imbalance in expenditure on personnel and relocations and on other informational activities. His Delegation reaffirmed its support for the Middle East Unit of the Radio and Visual Services Division; it was providing services in Arabic to the Arab world which were especially appreciated by the directors of broadcasting and television services there. The Middle East Unit should continue to be a single unit and should be supported and strengthened; its management level should be raised and the number of staff increased in conformity with their responsibilities and the situation in other units.

53. Mr. GEMIS (Belgium) said that the statement made on 19 November 1980 by the representative of Luxembourg on behalf of the nine member countries of the European Economic Community fully reflected his Government's position.

54. His delegation wished to reiterate its support for the efforts being made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to achieve the utmost efficiency together with maximum economy in all the Department's activities and to identify activities that were obsolete, redundant, ineffective or of marginal usefulness. In that connexion, the constructive dialogue established between the Department and the Committee on Information should help the Department regularly to submit its programmes to a critical review. His delegation also particularly appreciated the establishment of a Planning, Programming and Evaluation Unit.

55. The work of the Committee on Information and the debate on it, in the Special Political Committee revealed the international community's growing awareness of the universality of problems concerning information and communication. Signs of solidarity and common interests were also emerging and should help to redress the imbalance existing in that field. However, the ongoing gap in the field of communications could not be eliminated merely by the physical development of infrastructures or by the transfer of technologies. In the long run, the necessary balance would be achieved through the elimination of the different obstacles impeding the development of truly independent

(Mr. Geens, Belgium)

communication systems and through the freer and broader flow of information at the regional, national and international levels.

56. The trend towards reflection and practical action apparent in recent years in the activities of UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union would gradually help to define the tasks to be accomplished and to indicate the best ways of integrating communication in the global development strategy. In so doing, it was important to avoid all forms of duplication.

57. With regard to the specific proposals concerning the fellowship programme for the training of journalists and broadcasting personnel contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/35/603), his delegation considered the scope and duration of the programme to be realistic and well designed, at least in the initial stage, since the professional and technical resources and the time available to the Department of Public Information were quite limited.

58. His Delegation supported the proposal contained in paragraph 34 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/35/603), especially since regional training centres for radio and television broadcasters could make an extremely valuable contribution to the programme. His delegation also supported the proposals contained in paragraphs 36 and 43 of that report.

59. With regard to United Nations television facilities in Geneva referred to in paragraph 31 of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/35/504, his delegation suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that the relatively modest amount of funds necessary for the equipment referred to therein should be made available during the current biennium so that more satisfactory and effective co-operation between the Information Service in Geneva and the television networks could be established as soon as possible. By the same token, his delegation fully supported the recommendation contained in paragraph 42 of the same report concerning the maximum utilization of the possibilities offered by television to promote a better understanding of the United Nations in Western Europe.

60. In conclusion, referring to the alleged contradiction between the principle of freedom and that of responsibility in the field of information, his delegation felt that the countries of the third world could gain nothing from propagandistic or sterile debates on that subject. As the representative of Singapore had stressed, a synthesis of both principles suited to the cultural needs of each country would gradually take shape. The elements of such a synthesis were already apparent in existing systems: those systems that stressed responsibility constantly found their rigidity tested by unofficial publications, while those that stressed freedom of information had to operate within the limits of the legislation protecting individual citizens and the public against abuses of such freedom. Moreover, many countries had press councils or tribunals which ensured that journalists respected the principle of responsibility. In that connexion, his delegation had been very pleased to note the recommendation contained in the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems to the effect that a code of ethics for the work of such

(Mr. Geens, Belgium)

press councils should be adopted by the members of the profession themselves, without any governmental interference.

61. Mr. HI (China) said that China supported the work of the Committee on Information. He drew attention to the fact that several years earlier the developing countries had raised the issue of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order, an initiative that reflected the urgent need to change various illogical conditions prevailing in the field of information, while preserving national independence and striving for the establishment of a new international economic order.

62. The current world situation was characterized by the rapid development of science and technology as well as by persistent, serious threats to world peace and to the independence and security of States; in that context, the super-Powers were intensifying their rivalry in various parts of the world, especially the Soviet hegemonists, who were pursuing their policy of aggression and expansion, while frantically advertising "military détente," "friendly co-operation" and "consolidation of peace" in order to divert the world's attention. On the other hand, many countries of the third world were, in many respects, still being subjected to the aggression, exploitation, plunder and control of imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism and were considerably less developed in economic terms as well as in terms of science and technology. Accordingly, their technical means in the field of information and communication lagged far behind those of the developed countries. That state of affairs was inconsistent with the role those countries played in current international affairs; it also hindered their efforts further to consolidate their national independence to achieve social progress, to oppose imperialism, colonialism and hegemonism and to help to maintain world peace and stability. Therefore, his delegation supported the developing countries' legitimate efforts in favour of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order.

63. Ideas about how to establish such a new world order differed from State to State and within the international community. In his delegation's opinion, the establishment of a new world information and communication order must be conducive to world peace and to the establishment of a new international economic order; it must also promote economic, social and cultural development and proper understanding and friendly exchanges among peoples, particularly in the many developing countries. It was essential that the developing countries should persist in their efforts to achieve self-reliance through individual and collective measures. However, they also needed the help of the developed countries and of international organizations. All such co-operation should be based on mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in the countries' internal affairs, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence, and all international assistance undertaken in that connexion must scrupulously respect the national sovereignty of the recipient countries. It was also important that such assistance should be suited to the specific conditions and needs of the recipient countries and should be directed towards increasing their self-reliance, thus helping them to strengthen their political and economic independence and to enhance their social and cultural

(Mr. Mi, China)

development. The information and communication activities of the United Nations and related organizations should give greater attention to reporting the struggles and achievements of the developing countries, to training more information and communication personnel in the developing countries and to providing them with facilities and economic and technical assistance. Moreover, measures should be taken within the Department of Public Information to correct the existing unfair imbalance in the geographical distribution of the staff: the number of posts assigned to the developing countries should be increased, and linguistic balance should be emphasized. An effort should also be made to ensure the balanced use of the official languages of the United Nations, including Chinese, in the information, broadcasts and publications of the United Nations.

64. As a developing country, China had for the past 30 years attached great importance to the expansion of information and communication activities and to international co-operation in that field. Although the Chinese media did not yet possess advanced technical equipment, they had always devoted considerable space and time to news concerning the struggles and achievements of the developing countries. There were currently more than 1,500 newspapers and magazines in China, and the Xinhua News Agency had established branch offices in 85 countries and regions. Moreover, that agency had concluded separate agreements with 48 other news agencies throughout the world and was conducting free exchanges of information and news photos with them on a basis of equality and mutual benefit. In the field of broadcasting, China had also made steady progress and had established vast wire broadcast systems in rural areas. However, its per capita communication equipment was still inadequate and, in that connexion, China hoped, through international exchanges, to incorporate anything that was advanced and useful in the modernization and development of its information and broadcasting system, while basing all such efforts on self-reliance.

65. Despite the protracted struggle and sustained efforts necessary to achieve a new world information and communication order, the Chinese delegation was convinced that, through a complete exchange of views and friendly consultations among delegations, the current gap could gradually be narrowed and co-operation and exchanges between countries could be developed continuously in order to facilitate the early establishment of a new world information and communication order.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.