



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37TH MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUBARAZ (Yemen)

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

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1. Mr. SKOGMO (Norway) said that questions relating to information touched upon every facet of international relations, and access to information was therefore a political problem which concerned everyone. His Government firmly believed in the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to which everyone had the right to freedom of opinion and expression; that right included freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. However, serious imbalances existed between nations and peoples with regard to their access to modern means of communication and information, and in that context the developing countries had put forward demands for a new world information and communication order. The Norwegian Government recognized that there was a pressing need to develop a media structure that would meet the elementary demands for communication and dissemination of knowledge and serve as a basis for an exchange of information as part of the over-all development strategy. In the deliberations at the General Conference of UNESCO, his Government had expressed its willingness to join in efforts to overcome the current imbalance of the international information order by strengthening the media structure of developing countries.

2. In its resolution 34/182, the General Assembly had requested the Committee on Information to continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, to evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications and to promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order. The best way of dealing with the practical and technical questions relating to that new world information order was through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) established by UNESCO. Norway, as a member of the new Intergovernmental Council of the Programme, would take an active part in its work on communication questions, which should be evaluated, discussed and financed in the context of the general development strategy.

3. Where United Nations information activities and policies were concerned, his delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the new fellowship

(Mr. Skogmo, Norway)

programme (A/35/603). It also welcomed the establishment of the Planning, Programming and Evaluation Unit within the Department of Public Information and wished to stress the importance of a systematic effort to make maximum use of the available resources. There was a need for better co-ordination of information activities within the United Nations system and for a common strategy on how to present the work of the system to the world community; the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) had important tasks ahead of it in that respect. His delegation attached great importance to information centres and to the work of voluntary organizations in spreading knowledge about issues within the United Nations system and believed that closer co-operation should be established between such organizations and the United Nations information centres.

4. Mr. NEVES (Portugal) said that, as article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights indicated, freedom of opinion and expression was a fundamental human right; the defence and enjoyment of all other human rights could only be guaranteed by that freedom, and any attempt to control the media or to impose restrictions on the expression and exchange of opinions or ideas, whether based on ideological or political considerations, was therefore unacceptable. The new world information order should promote a wider and better balanced flow of information among different countries and regions of the world, one of its aims being the preservation of each nation's cultural identity. His delegation was encouraged by the fact that the principle of freedom of information had been repeatedly upheld, as had recently been the case at the General Conference of UNESCO in Belgrade. UNESCO played a major role in the common endeavours to achieve consensus in that field, and the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) was a step towards the achievement of the objectives of the new world information order.

5. In the field of information, his Government attached particular importance to bilateral co-operation programmes. Portugal and Mozambique had recently signed a memorandum on social communications aimed at promoting better knowledge and friendship between the peoples of the two countries through a more balanced flow of information, technical co-operation and assistance in various fields, such as journalism training.

6. The recommendations included in the report of the Committee on Information (A/35/21) constituted a useful basis for the continuation of United Nations activities in that field. The report referred to the need for simultaneous availability of information material in all official languages and stressed the use of regional languages; in that connexion, he would like to emphasize the fact that Portuguese was, of all the non-official languages of the United Nations, the one that was spoken in the largest number of countries. It was the official language of seven States Members of the United Nations, representing 150 million people, and of such important regional organizations as OAU and OAS. The divulgation of United Nations information in Portuguese therefore deserved particular attention.

7. Mr. DIEZ (Chile) said he was gratified to note that, despite differences of opinion, information and communication was no longer being considered from a theoretical and abstract standpoint but had become the subject of practical

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7. Mr. DIEZ (Chile) said he was gratified to note that, despite differences of opinion, information and communication was no longer being considered from a theoretical and abstract standpoint but had become the subject of practical

(Mr. Diez, Chile)

discussions in the United Nations. With regard to the establishment of a new world information and communication order, his delegation wished to reiterate that the exercise of freedom of opinion, expression and information was an essential factor for peaceful coexistence and for friendly relations and co-operation among peoples and that access to varied sources of information should be guaranteed. Consequently, the study and evaluation of the world information and communication order should take into account the applicability at all times of those principles and should promote the goal of co-operation with a view to the achievement of more just and better balanced structures enabling all States to have access to information and communication media. The establishment of balance and greater reciprocity in the flow of information must be based on relations of mutual understanding. With regard to the responsibility of the information media, his delegation fully agreed that the media had definite responsibilities in such matters as preserving the identity of each State and promoting friendship and co-operation among peoples. However, the primary and basic responsibility of the media was a commitment to truth, which could be disseminated only if the principles of freedom of expression, opinion and information were fully observed and which could not be identified with a commitment to the service of the political régime in power.

8. In its information activities, the United Nations should endeavour in particular to promote relations of co-operation and assistance between developing and developed countries and to create an awareness of the needs of the developing countries, especially with regard to technological means for developing their own information structures. Where General Assembly resolution 34/182 was concerned, his delegation welcomed the spirit of co-operation and co-ordination which had prevailed between UNESCO and the General Assembly. UNESCO had a key role to play in providing assistance and training to developing countries, bearing in mind the vital influence of communications on the economic, social and cultural development of peoples. Whatever arrangements were adopted in connexion with the International Programme for the Development of Communication, the Programme should promote respect for and enjoyment of the principles of freedom and, at the same time, focus on providing States with the assistance and co-operation they needed.

9. As his delegation had stated on previous occasions, it was essential that the activities of the Department of Public Information should be properly evaluated and structured, with priority being given to economic issues, particularly the establishment of the new international economic order, and to legal questions, highlighting the untiring efforts of the Organization in the development of legal norms governing relations between States, co-operation and the promotion of international peace and security. The low esteem in which the United Nations was held by public opinion was due to the mistaken approach taken by the Department of Public Information in stressing the more dubious and peripheral political aspects of the Organization instead of highlighting the basic aspects of peace-keeping, solidarity and mutual assistance among peoples. Priority must also be given to such issues as disarmament, decolonization, social development and United Nations peace-keeping operations.

10. The question of the geographical balance of the staff of the Department was of particular importance. The representation of nationals of developing countries

(Mr. Diez, Chile)

should be increased at all levels of decision-making. The question of linguistic balance was also important, and the issue of informational material in Spanish should respond dynamically to the needs of the Spanish-speaking countries. Where the Department's financial resources were concerned, there was a need not only for more responsible investment of funds but also for an increase in resources, which the General Assembly should allocate to the Department in proportion to the increase in the totality of United Nations programmes in which DPI was required to collaborate.

11. His delegation endorsed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group concerning the use of the most up-to-date and appropriate techniques for the production and dissemination of information by the United Nations and looked forward to the results of the evaluation of the means already available to the Department; particular attention should be given to the situation with regard to radio and television, which provided an important flow of news and information to the media in developing countries. The training programmes for broadcasters and journalists should continue to receive support from the Secretariat in order to ensure rational and efficient utilization of the fellowships under each programme. His delegation considered the work of the Joint United Nations Information Committee to be essential, especially with regard to the pooling of information within the United Nations system and the establishment of a more just and more effective world information order in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly. In that connexion, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that co-operation and co-ordination within the system were essential in order to avoid duplication and facilitate the full and effective utilization of the wide range of expertise available in the United Nations system and, at the same time, to project a unified image of common goals and objectives.

12. For those reasons, his delegation supported the work in the field of information of the General Assembly and the Committee on Information, of which Chile was honoured to be a member.

13. Ms. RATNAYAKE (Sri Lanka) said that the title of the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, "Many voices, one world", aptly reflected the reality of global interdependence, which unfortunately was not universally understood and appreciated. All mankind was threatened by an arms race that continued unchecked, economic inequalities had reached record levels with little progress towards the restructuring of international economic relations, and conflicts continued in a world where injustice and imbalance were constantly increasing. The vast progress in science and technology and the rapid development of mass communications in the satellite age provided an opportunity to promote better understanding of the global interdependence among nations and to establish a more just and more effective world information and communication order. As the non-aligned countries had declared at their fifth summit conference in Colombo, the new information and communication order was as vital as the new international economic order.

14. In order to bring about a wider and better balanced spread of information, the developing countries would have to achieve greater independence in the field of communications. The Pool of Non-aligned News Agencies and the Broadcasting Organization of the Non-aligned Countries had made steady progress in

(Ms. Ratnayake, Sri Lanka)

that direction. Sri Lanka was taking steps towards the establishment of a computerized data bank to serve the needs of developing and other countries, and had also taken steps to extend the special telecommunication tariff rates for mass media so as to promote a greater volume of news among non-aligned countries. However, despite the efforts of non-aligned and developing countries, substantial imbalances and inequalities continued in the global communication process; it was therefore unfortunate that the call for a new communication order was the subject of polemics. The non-aligned countries did not see the call for accurate, fair and balanced reporting as censorship, nor did they see freedom of the press as meaning irresponsible licence.

15. Turning to the United Nations activities in the field of information and communication, she drew attention to the need for carefully co-ordinating the work of all bodies in the United Nations system. With regard to the Department of Public Information, she noted that the Department's share of the total regular budget had declined by more than half; additional resources should be provided to DPI in proportion to the increase in the total programme which it was required to service. Her delegation welcomed the establishment of a Planning, Programming and Evaluation Unit within the Department. The training programme for journalists and broadcasters was a limited one and needed to be expanded in co-ordination with other United Nations agencies and programmes. Finally, the role, function and organization of United Nations information centres around the world needed to be reviewed carefully, taking into account the views expressed by Member States.

16. Her delegation commended UNESCO and its Director-General for the major part it had played in communication issues and for the assistance it had given to developing countries in that field.

17. Mr. GABRIEL (Malaysia) said that from 1976 to 1979 his delegation, together with the other members of the Association of South-East Asian nations, had sponsored resolutions aimed at improving the mass communications systems in the developing countries through international co-operation, better access to modern communications technology, greater exchanges of information between developed and developing countries and the promotion of international peace and understanding. In resolution 34/181, adopted by the General Assembly in 1979, the Director-General of UNESCO had been asked to study the possibility of establishing an international fund for the development of communications and to pursue his efforts to prepare an integrated model plan for co-operation and assistance in the field of information and mass communications. Both requests had received favourable consideration at the UNESCO General Conference and had been included in the international programme which, if fully implemented, could mark the beginning of a new international information order.

18. In regard to the need to co-ordinate the information activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system, his delegation considered that, despite the great improvement in United Nations information activities, there continued to be little understanding by the general public of the Organization's work. If the enormous amount of information available was properly disseminated, it would enhance international understanding of and increase public confidence in the United Nations. In that respect, the Department of Public



(Mr. Gabriel, Malaysia)

Information played a focal role and, as the resources available to it were clearly inadequate, he supported the recommendation of the Committee on Information that its relative growth rate should be commensurate with the increase in the programmes it was called upon to undertake. His delegation also supported the call by a number of delegations for an equitable geographical distribution of the personnel of the Department, particularly at the decision-making level, and for linguistic balance in the dissemination of information.

19. Mr. JOARDER (Bangladesh) said that in the current age of sophisticated information technology, the power of the media was enormous and could make a fundamental contribution to the establishment of the new international economic order, the strengthening of peace and understanding, and other international objectives.

20. In the statements of some delegations, an attempt had been made to draw a sharp distinction between "the free flow of ideas" and the "responsible flow of ideas", the former representing the concept of private ownership of the communication media and the second representing the idea of governmental guidance and direction. His delegation thought that the distinction was not as sharp as it had been made out to be, much less that it was an "all-good" or an "all-bad" situation. If the mass media were to help guard the freedom of citizens, they must not be under the complete control of government, but at the same time it would be cause for concern if they were to fall under the control of powerful private interests. Moreover, every Government had the legitimate right to guard its people against libel and obscenity, and those developing countries which were trying to mobilize their people for nation-building and national development should have some means of communication with the people.

21. His delegation regarded the work of the Committee on Information as vital, particularly for the developing countries. It also supported the idea of providing the Department of Public Information with resources proportionate to the over-all support that it was expected to provide for various United Nations programmes - and in that connexion it urged the undertaking of an extensive programme of public information activities concerning the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries - and stressed the need for an equitable geographical distribution of the personnel of the Department in accordance with Article 101 of the United Nations Charter. The Department should strengthen its programmes and activities in support of the development of the mass media infrastructure in developing countries. It was also necessary to achieve a linguistic balance in the dissemination of information and to promote the use of regional languages in information materials. For example, the exclusion of Bengali from the languages used by the Asian Unit of the United Nations Radio Service was hard to understand. His delegation also urged the Department to give consideration to the request for the establishment of an information centre at Dacca and supported the proposal that the Department should provide on-the-job training for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries.

22. In conclusion, he expressed his satisfaction at the outcome of the twenty-first General Conference of UNESCO, particularly the establishment of the Intergovernmental Programme for the Development of Communication and the Intergovernmental Council of 35 members, of whom Bangladesh was one.

23. Mr. SHAIKHO (Bahrain) said that the information activities of the United Nations system should play a leading role in helping the world to become more aware of such issues as peace, disarmament, decolonization, human rights, the struggle against apartheid and racial discrimination, the establishment of a new international economic order, and the development of international relations under the rule of law. Nor should the importance be forgotten of the role of the United Nations in creating conditions for promoting better understanding among the peoples, which made it more than ever necessary that information activities should be carried out by a body based on the principle of geographical balance, so that it could perform its duties properly.

24. He expressed his appreciation of the activities of the United Nations information system, and mentioned the hopes that should be placed in the International Programme for the Development of Communication. He also repeated his support for resolution 34/182 which, among other things, called for a balance in the use of official languages in information activities, and stressed the need, in accordance with the views expressed, to make certain important changes in the Department of Public Information, in particular in the radio and television services, with a view to enabling the equitable participation of personnel from various countries, particularly in posts at the higher levels, on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.

25. The international community, in particular the developing countries, hoped for the establishment of a new information order which would ensure a free and balanced flow of ideas and a diversity of information sources on the basis of the principles that had been agreed on.

26. In conclusion, he noted that the network of United Nations Information Centres would be increasingly important in the 1980s because of activities in various fields, such as those connected with the new international economic order and the global negotiations, and the possibility of important international political events, particularly in Namibia and Palestine.

27. Mr. DYACHENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that information, especially in the United Nations system, should serve to promote peace, co-operation and trust among peoples. It had acquired greater importance thanks to the revolutionary changes and the emergence of new independent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Information helped to form public opinion and influenced the political decision-making process, and had thus come to occupy an important position in world politics; but the opportunities it offered could be used as much to contribute to human understanding and resolving national or world problems as they could to creating distrust and hatred among peoples.

28. In 1978 the twentieth General Conference of UNESCO had adopted 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 Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War. That was the first international document to set forth the general principles of the use of information; but its implementation came up against the opposition of the forces which used world information as a means to prevent positive changes from taking place in the world or to interfere in the internal affairs of other States.

(Mr. Dyachenko, Ukrainian SSR)

Those enemies of international co-operation, among which the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and the BBC played an important role, had recently launched their psychological warfare against the socialist countries. In the world today two thirds of all information in non-socialist countries was controlled by United States monopolies; four fifths of all periodicals and nine tenths of radio stations of world importance were likewise controlled by Western imperialist monopolies, as were 80 per cent of television programmes and 60 per cent of films. Those media were directed at the developing countries constituting two thirds of the world population, which amounted to information imperialism. The content of the information sent to third-world countries was tendentious, subjective, showed only one partial aspect of the reality of the developing countries and merely reflected the interests of the capitalist countries.

29. Most of the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America had freed themselves from imperialism but had no way of knowing what was happening in the world and in their own countries. The dependence of information was a logical result of economic dependence. The transnational corporations were attempting in those countries to promote bourgeois concepts of development and to misrepresent the progressive economic and social changes in certain countries, so that the information provided did not serve the ideals of peace and social progress but the interests of the monopolies. Its most important features were slander, military propaganda and violence, anti-humanitarian films and literature, and silence on the subject of the Western world's own problems. Paragraph 26 of the report of the Committee on Information (A/35/21) said 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". The only way to achieve that was to establish new independent media in the new States which would lead to the establishment of the new information order and finally of the new international economic order.

30. The progress of science and technology had produced revolutionary changes in the media, and it was high time for every country to be able to make full and sovereign use of those benefits of civilization. His delegation fully understood the needs and aspirations of the developing countries to eliminate information imperialism, improve national communication media and establish a new world information order which should be based on the struggle for national sovereignty in that area and the elimination of the vestiges of colonialism and imperialism in the spiritual life of their peoples. It was necessary to help develop the national information systems of those countries by strengthening their material resources and offering them political, economic, social and cultural assistance. The principles which had been proclaimed as norms of international relations should be applied to the communications media, and the international exchange of information should be brought into line with the provisions of the Charter, the Final Act of Helsinki, and the UNESCO Declaration on Mass Media. The policy of the countries of the socialist community promoted the democratization of the information order throughout the world, and the interaction between the socialist countries and the developing countries in the field of communications, as in other

(Mr. Dyachenko, Ukrainian SSR)

fields, was a model of co-operation on an equal footing. The functions of information in the modern world placed new demands on the information activities of the United Nations which should contribute by every possible means to achieving the objectives of the Organization.

31. His delegation had observed that there had recently been an improvement in the activities of the Department of Public Information, but at the same time considered it necessary to point out that United Nations publications still did not accurately reflect the fundamental problems before the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and other socio-political, legal and economic bodies of the United Nations system. As in the past, there was still a lack of balance in the approach to such important United Nations functions as strengthening international peace and security, halting the armaments race, disarmament, decolonization and the struggle against apartheid and racial discrimination which should be the centre of the Department's attention at all times. His delegation would like to see the Department participating more extensively in those activities and projecting a more complete and multifaceted picture of the United Nations, among other reasons in order to counter the distorted information concerning the United Nations put out by certain publications.

32. His delegation supported the justified requests addressed to the Department of Public Information concerning the necessity of establishing better co-ordination, exercising moderation in its expenditures and increasing its effectiveness. In its view increasing the volume and improving the quality of the Department's work would be feasible without new budgetary allocations if the funds which it already had available were to be distributed more effectively and unnecessary programmes eliminated or reduced. It was regrettable that many of the recommendations in the report of the Committee on Information failed to take into account the onerous financial implications which they would entail.

33. Mr. AL-BONIN (Qatar) said that it was of primary importance to uphold the principle of freedom when establishing the new world information and communication order and that no measure adopted in that connexion should violate that fundamental principle, otherwise the defects of the present order would be aggravated. On the other hand, the principle of national sovereignty had to be reinforced in the area of information by curtailing the activities of the information agencies of the developed countries, especially transnational agencies, and by providing the necessary technical expertise for the developing countries to be able to make proper use of modern technology.

34. In order to become independent in the field of communications and to promote international peace and security while confronting colonialist campaigns, each country or group of countries should seek to establish its own information programmes. In that connexion mention should be made of the experimental project being undertaken by a group of Arab countries, among them Qatar, with regard to the Fifth Conference of Ministers of Information of Arab Countries which had decided, inter alia, to establish a permanent secretariat of the Conference and had urged the news agencies of the Gulf countries to make every effort to achieve

(Mr. Al-Bonin, Qatar)

independence in the field of information. Those countries were about to launch a satellite to promote the interaction of radio and television services.

35. With regard to the activities of the Department of Public Information, his delegation believed that the principle of equitable geographical distribution and of linguistic balance, which should govern United Nations information activities in general, should be observed. Greater attention should be paid to the Middle East, and co-operation should be established with local organizations in order to promote the Organization's information activities. Likewise, it would be necessary to expand the Arabic services of the Department of Public Information and to recruit greater numbers of qualified staff to work in news dissemination.

36. His delegation denounced Zionist information practices, which ran counter to the world order that the United Nations intended to establish in that field. The Zionist entity engaged in the dissemination of racist ideas and principles, while at the same time trying to control news in the Arabic-language newspapers in the area under its authority, and terrorizing the population. The international community should exert pressure on the oppressor authority to make it allow freedom of expression to the peoples under its domination.

37. It was to be hoped that efforts to establish a new world information and communication order would make it possible to remedy the current shortcomings and enhance knowledge of world events, thereby contributing to correcting or eliminating the adverse political and economic consequences of the prevailing situation in the sphere of information.

38. Miss FRANK (Netherlands) said that, although the views of the European Economic Community on questions relating to information had already been conveyed in general terms to the Committee, her delegation believed that it would be useful to make a few comments on the item. Without wishing in any way to enter into polemics, she had, first and foremost, to reiterate the supreme importance which her Government attached to the principle of freedom of information and of expression, as a human right. Since 1946 the United Nations had defended freedom of information and had consistently emphasized its importance. In 1948 the right to freedom of opinion and expression had been explicitly provided for in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In 1966 that right had been reiterated and elaborated upon in article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and had also been reaffirmed in the 1950 European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed at Rome. Her Government believed that the free flow of information was essential, since freedom to form and express opinions was not only of importance for the development of the individual, but was also a fundamental pre-condition for the functioning of democracy. Her delegation had noted with great interest that various delegations from developing countries had also defended that point of view at the most recent session of the Committee on Information. The second fundamental principle, namely that there should be a balanced flow of information, was related to the free flow of information, since it had to be understood that the notion of "balance" presupposed the widest and most diversified possible information; in that respect, it was incumbent upon Governments to create propitious conditions for freedom of information. In the opinion of her

(Miss Frank, Netherlands)

Government, the flow of information should be better balanced internationally. The balance could be redressed by furnishing the developing countries with technical and financial assistance so that they could establish their own infrastructure in that field. It was inadmissible that aspirations to a new, more balanced international situation should entail any restriction of the freedom of information and communication.

39. Her delegation, as a member of the Committee on Information, was well aware of the enormous task which fell to the Department of Public Information, and would endeavour to make a constructive contribution to the future work of that Committee. Given the numerous activities of the United Nations and the countless requests of the General Assembly and, on the other hand, current budgetary constraints, the Department should exercise some choice so that neither the quality of its publications nor the effectiveness of its other information activities would be adversely affected. It was to be hoped that at its forthcoming sessions the Committee on Information would be able to draw up more explicit recommendations and establish an order of priority for the activities of the Department.

40. Her delegation followed with interest the work of the Division for Economic and Social Information. It had a very high opinion of the periodical Development Forum; in that connexion, she drew attention to paragraphs 49 to 51 of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/35/504. She also stressed the importance of the work of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), a subsidiary body of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC). It was to be hoped that JUNIC could continue fulfilling its interagency co-ordination function, without prejudice to the fundamental role of UNESCO in the field of information and communication, and that any needless duplication in the United Nations system would be avoided.

41. With reference to the twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO, she expressed her delegation's satisfaction at the adoption by consensus of the resolution establishing the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), her country being a member of the Intergovernmental Council. As for the resolution adopted at the same session on the conclusions of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, her delegation was pleased that stress had been laid in that resolution on the need to guarantee freedom of expression and of opinion, as well as freedom of the press and of information.

42. Mr. HOUNGAVOU (Benin) said that it was by no means redundant to recall certain points which were particularly illustrative of the current situation in the sphere of information and communication. He referred principally to its total monopoly by certain economic powers and by international imperialism, and the way in which news was manipulated by the selection of items and content to be used as a weapon against the social progress of peoples. By such means it was possible, under the guise of freedom of information, to befog international public opinion with news which served the propaganda purposes of the Western news media

(Mr. Houngavou, Benin)

and transnational bodies. It was obvious that that situation could not continue without provoking a reaction from nations all over the world, and particularly in the third world, and the demand for acceptable, just and equitable changes.

43. Various recent General Assembly resolutions had emphasized the need thoroughly to reform the United Nations information system, and to define and promote a new world information order. The Committee on Information had studied those matters systematically, and in its reports had made recommendations to which his country attached supreme importance, especially where they concerned those specific aspects to which the Department of Public Information should devote special attention, namely the liberation of southern Africa from South African colonialism and apartheid, the adverse consequences of Israel's Zionist policy of occupation and aggression, and the daily struggle being waged by peoples against foreign domination, particularly in Africa.

44. In view of the serious geographical imbalance which was a feature of the recruitment and distribution of staff of the Department of Public Information, the Committee on Information had also explicitly recommended that the Secretary-General should increase the number of staff members from developing countries, especially from Africa. His delegation called for the rapid implementation of that recommendation. Another important recommendation of the Committee concerned linguistic balance in the dissemination of information by the United Nations system through publications, radio and television. That linguistic imbalance was harmful, and impeded the work of delegations of Member States.

45. There was a need to make proper use of modern means of mass communication, namely radio and television, in order to achieve the goals set by United Nations decisions and resolutions. The Committee on Information and the Secretary-General should devote special attention to the question of short-wave and frequency modulation broadcasts, as well as to the establishment of a United Nations television station at Geneva. In the meantime, it was necessary to intensify co-operation between the United Nations and African stations transmitting on short wave to southern Africa. News should also be disseminated in the heart of Europe, from Geneva, and for that purpose terms should be negotiated with government authorities for the use of frequencies already allocated to the United Nations. The programmes should reflect all the matters considered at United Nations Headquarters. The training of journalists and radio and television broadcasters was basic in assisting third-world liberation, development and independence. In its own particular sphere UNESCO had already introduced an interesting training programme for journalists and radio and television broadcasters from developing countries. The programme proposed by the Secretary-General in document A/35/504 was a minimum one which would have to be expanded considerably. In order to perform all those tasks, it was necessary to co-ordinate information activities within both the Secretariat and the United Nations system as a whole. Apart from the technical aspects, the need to ensure equitable geographical representation should be reiterated, so that the representation of a range of opinions would be guaranteed in the various planning, programming and evaluation teams and groups, thereby ensuring political balance within the Organization.

(Mr. Houngavou, Benin)

46. The decolonization of information encompassed a much broader field, namely the structuring of a new world information order. That was the only way to put an end to the existing monopolies and their adverse consequences. Considerable progress had already been made in that direction, but much remained to be done; it was essential that everyone should participate in the task.

47. Mrs. KEKEH (Togo), referring first of all to the need to strengthen the role of the Department of Public Information, said that her delegation endorsed the action proposed in that connexion by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Committee on Information. The Department should give the widest possible publicity to United Nations activities, above all in the areas of international peace and security, economic and social development, the establishment of the new international economic order, and disarmament, and it must have sufficient resources for that purpose. The strengthening of the Department's functions and resources would enable it to play a more important role in the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information order, which was an essential complement to the new international economic order.

48. The chief goal of that new information order was to put an end to the great inequality between the third world and the developed countries in the field of communications media, infrastructure and access to information. Freedom of the press and democratization of information in all regions of the world were very important elements of the new world information order, and in that context it was essential that the news agencies of the industrialized countries should cease projecting an absurd and tendentious image of the third world. The twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO, held recently at Belgrade, had without doubt constituted an important milestone on the way towards the new world information order.

49. With regard to the problem of the training of third-world journalists and broadcasting and television personnel, there was a need for co-operation in that field between the Department of Information and UNESCO, as well as other organs of the United Nations system concerned with training. Lastly, her delegation attached great importance to observance of the principle of equitable geographical distribution in connexion with the recruitment of the staff of the Department of Public Information. It was to be hoped that appropriate action would be taken to increase the number of staff members from developing countries and to give them access to high-level posts.

50. Mrs. REYES (Colombia) said that communication was a basic requirement for mankind and for life in society, and that the United Nations was fundamentally a centre of communication where dialogue brought the peoples of the world closer together. It was also necessary to recognize the fundamental fact that information was a power factor closely linked to economic development, since growth of communications, improvement of communications and information flows had a direct impact on the development and progress of the peoples of the world. It would be appropriate for the United Nations to establish an international communication policy.



(Mrs. Reyes, Colombia)

51. Freedom of expression was a response to a natural need of mankind that predated established private or public norms; freedom of information, which was one of the pillars of democracy, was derived from it. Colombia was a country that prided itself on being free and on respecting the principles of a sound democracy; her Government had always respected freedom of the press, and citizens' views were expressed in the press without fear of coercion or punishment.

52. The topic of freedom of expression led on to that of the new world information and communication order, which was in turn closely linked to the new international economic order. In the twentieth century rapid progress in communications technology and the avalanche of information were double-edged weapons, since communications media were an instrument of mankind that could be used for mankind's benefit or for its destruction, and either to liberate or to oppress the peoples of the world. Totalitarian systems controlled information as an element of their power, just as the capitalist monopolies of the developed countries did; that situation worked to the detriment of the developing countries, which did not have the financial resources to acquire costly communications technology. Her delegation supported all action taken by the United Nations to protect developing countries from information monopolies and a sensationalist press, which distorted the image of countries and their Governments in order to create tensions and exert pressures that were politically and economically advantageous to the great Powers. It was essential to correct that unjust imbalance in the flow of, and access to, information, and the United Nations should promote the establishment of a new world information and communication order in which the power that communications represented was distributed evenly; a two-way flow of information was encouraged and the cultural monopoly and the intellectual colonization of developing peoples were abolished.

53. With regard to the activities of the Department of Public Information, which should be aimed at promoting the goals of the United Nations, her delegation had noted with concern that in many instances dissemination of information became a platform for certain officials, which distorted the Organization's image and was of no benefit whatsoever to it. With regard to the Department's staff, the principle of balanced geographical participation should be respected more in DPI than in any other sector of the United Nations, in view of the vital importance of its functions; her delegation therefore fully supported the recommendation made by the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Committee on Information that immediate action should be taken in that respect.

54. Progress in communications technology was so rapid that communications policies could not keep pace. Even though the Organization had been in existence for 35 years, it was only two years since the United Nations had drawn up a policy in that area. That fact, together with the Organization's bureaucratic slowness, meant that it had not been possible to modernize United Nations equipment to the necessary extent. The United Nations must use all modern means or run the risk of becoming isolated. Her delegation endorsed any programme involving greater use of television, such as the World Chronicle for the United States and Canada, and requested that the Latin American countries should also have television programmes in Spanish; it also endorsed the recommendation made by the Ad Hoc Working Group

(Mrs. Reyes, Colombia)

that the Radio Service of the Department of Public Information should be expanded. Moreover, her delegation considered it essential to promote a policy of facilitating contact between the representatives of Member States and journalists and to ensure that the information material produced by the United Nations actually reached those for whom it was intended, especially the developing countries. It was also necessary to implement the recommendation put forward in the Ad Hoc Working Group by the French delegation that arrangements should be made with newspapers in various countries for publication of a joint quarterly supplement (world press supplement), in which research work, policies, social questions or documents of general interest for the international community would be disseminated. In the case of the Latin American countries, that idea could be realized through the Inter-American Press Association.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.