



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 40th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MATHIAS (Portugal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 59: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/35/21, 362 and Add.1, 504 and Corr.1, 603)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION;
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL;
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION;
- (d) CO-OPERATION AND ASSISTANCE IN THE APPLICATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF NATIONAL INFORMATION AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS FOR SOCIAL PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT: REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

1. Mr. DORR (Ireland) said that agenda item 59 involved some difficult and complex issues which were best discussed in a substantive manner within the UNESCO framework. His delegation, however, wished to comment on some of the broader issues which presented countries such as his with certain difficulties.

2. Democratic societies were deeply attached to the ideal of freedom of the press, even if that ideal was not always perfectly attained in practice. A free press was essential in order to keep citizens fully informed and to monitor Government activities and express public opinion. The relationship between Governments and the press was not always an easy one. Democratic Governments valued freedom of the press, but the press itself did not wish Governments to be the sole arbiter in those matters. The press felt that it had a duty to ensure that the freedom to report and criticize, which had been established with difficulty over a long period of time, was not diminished or attenuated. Although at times there were certain tensions in the relationship between Governments and the press, those tensions could also be healthy. Democratic Governments expressed the strongest possible support for the free flow of information at the international level, and supported the right of a free press to report and criticize freely when dealing with international, as well as domestic, issues.

3. On the other hand, countries such as Ireland were also particularly sensitive to the general case now being made by developing countries that many of the so-called "structures of international society" were unfair, since they had been established at a time when Western interests were dominant politically, economically and culturally. Many third world countries argued that the inequity in the flow of information between North and South reinforced the disparities in the economic field, that the news media did not objectively report the news, and that the power in news presentation was now more concentrated than ever before because of the importance of technology and the large-scale resources involved. In practice, news media or news agencies in a few of the large industrialized countries selected and determined priorities, and, in that sense, chose what was news. Certain third world countries questioned the standards on which those choices were made. In that

(Mr. Dorr, Ireland)

regard, the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems was useful because it questioned the assumption that the structures which created news at the international level were completely value-free and objective. The truth of the matter was that it was dangerous to assume that any human organization or practices were wholly neutral or value-free. The Commission's report provided a cogent argument for the view that present structures and communication reflected the lifestyles, values and models of a few societies, spreading to the rest of the world certain types of consumption and certain development patterns in preference to others.

4. His delegation felt that, in dealing with issues on which there was little agreement, it was necessary to take as a basis article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provided that everyone had the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers. The aim should be to try to make that principle a reality for more and more people everywhere.

5. His country had considerable sympathy for the case made by many third world countries that their interests and concerns did not find adequate expression in present news-reporting since communications resources were concentrated in the developed world and in relatively few hands. That situation should be improved, but only in accordance with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His delegation would support proposals that would lead to greater freedom and better communication for mankind as a whole; but it was not in favour of proposals that would lead to greater restrictions, less access to information under the guise of greater fairness, and a reduction of existing freedoms. Many countries in the third world which were truly concerned about their development would see that development was helped, not hindered, by greater freedom of the press, which could provide a regular assessment of progress made and the priorities which had been established. Although criticism might be troublesome, lack of criticism could ultimately be more dangerous. Furthermore, in countries where the information media were subject to Government control, that which was allowed to be reported seemed less credible to the public. The result was the development of a web of rumours and informal channels, which many people accepted as more reliable than the officially approved organs of opinion.

6. On the other hand, his delegation would not argue that the present situation in regard to international news reporting was satisfactory. Although the major international news media said - for the most part, rightly - that they sought to be objective, the problem lay not so much with their conscious policy as with the basic values which they unconsciously expressed. All news reporting must be based on selection, which inevitably reflected certain values. The remedy was not the suppression of news or information, but a greater diversity of sources at the international level so that different viewpoints, based on different outlooks, could also find expression.

7. Moreover, it was not really accurate to speak of those problems in terms of developed countries as opposed to developing countries. Ireland was a small,

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developed democracy with a reasonably good communications structure. Nevertheless, he felt that news about Ireland reported abroad was less balanced than it should be. That situation, however, could be improved only by increasing the information provided, not restricting or suppressing it. An accelerated programme for the transfer of technology on favourable terms to help developing countries in the field of communications could therefore be very important. The international programme for the development of communication adopted at the UNESCO General Conference was a step in that direction. The development of communication in the widest sense deserved high priority among both bilateral and multilateral development activities, and in the planning activities of developing countries themselves. Media attention could also be directed to development, by ensuring that development projects had an information communication component from the outset. Both national Governments and the United Nations system had responsibilities in that area. In Ireland projects designed to increase the awareness of the public about the developing world had been incorporated in his Government's bilateral programme of development co-operation, which in some cases was funded by the Government and non-governmental organizations.

8. The Committee on Information had carried out an arduous programme and had achieved results which were understandably inconclusive, but nonetheless valuable. He felt it was right that most of the Working Group's recommendations related to United Nations policies and activities in the field of public information. His delegation supported the view that implementation of those recommendations was a continuing process, and that follow-up was important before new activities were undertaken. He hoped that the Committee would continue to observe those methodical guidelines, which were best calculated to bring about solid results.

9. The most valuable function of DPI was to publicize the activities of the United Nations itself, in order to gain the support of world public opinion on the many issues with which the Organization dealt. He noted with satisfaction the role of DPI in assisting media organizations and press representatives from developing countries. Encouraging coverage of United Nations activities by press representatives of Member States was one of the most effective ways of improving the balance of the information flow in an acceptable way. It was of particular value for developing countries, where possible, to have their own press representatives at the United Nations. DPI also had a central role as a stimulant and resource for the vast world-wide network of communications outside the mass media. By providing regular information to trade unions, news clubs, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations, DPI enabled such organizations to promote interest in, and knowledge of, the Organization. Such organizations, furthermore, relayed that information to local communities through their mailing lists, newsletters and participation in radio and television programmes.

10. His delegation supported the regional approach in the production of feature articles, and felt that local United Nations information centres should also be encouraged to focus attention on national development activities.

11. In order to prevent the danger of competition for the attention of DPI, a great deal of discipline should be exercised in issuing instructions to DPI with respect

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to priorities for specific topics. The activities of DPI should be monitored in order to see what feedback there was from users; and DPI should adjust its output accordingly. Evaluation by users should be built into the measures for efficiency and economy mentioned by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information.

12. Lastly, he agreed with delegations which had urged avoidance of duplication and overlapping by DPI with the work of other United Nations agencies.

13. Mr. JELONEK (Federal Republic of Germany) said that in an increasingly interdependent world, the free flow of information between nations and their unrestricted dialogue with one another assumed particular importance for developed and developing countries alike. The report of the Committee on Information, and especially the proposals of the Ad Hoc Working Group, clearly indicated the focus for work in the immediate future. The proposals of the Working Group, however, still required careful analysis and evaluation before decisions could be taken on their implementation. The process of introducing positive changes in the information activities of the United Nations required many individual steps, which must be properly co-ordinated.

14. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the spirit of co-operation shown throughout the recent UNESCO General Conference, which had facilitated the adoption of important resolutions by consensus. The Conference as a whole had been a positive event because, inter alia, it had reaffirmed the concept, expressed in the 1978 Media Declaration, of a free and better-balanced flow of information. In order to pursue the goal of establishing a more just and more efficient world information and communication order to strengthen international peace and understanding on the basis of the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information, it was necessary to bear in mind the implications of such action for the individual. It was gratifying to note that that aspect had also been emphasized by some representatives from developing countries. Unimpeded access to as many sources of information as possible, and free expression of views, were basic requirements. The dialogue between East and West must therefore be kept alive by ensuring for everyone unimpeded access to information, including uninterrupted reception of radio broadcasts and unimpeded travel for journalists, who must continue to be able to carry out the task of providing the public with the broadest possible range of information.

15. He noted with regret that some Eastern bloc countries had made certain remarks of a polemical nature, which were totally unrelated to the matter under discussion. Those remarks came from countries which, with their Government-controlled information services, did very little to give complete and objective coverage of important debates and resolutions of the United Nations, such as the recent debate and resolution on Afghanistan. Some of those countries had even spoken of an "anti-democratic propaganda war" allegedly waged by the Western media, including radio stations and newspapers in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Conference at Madrid had been convened in order to determine the extent to which the signatory States of the Helsinki Final Act had fulfilled their commitments to facilitate the freer and wider dissemination of information of all kinds, to encourage co-operation in the field of information and the exchange of information with other countries,

(Mr. Jelonek, Federal Republic of
Germany)

and to improve the conditions under which journalists from one State party conducted their work in another State party. His Government, therefore, deeply regretted that radio transmissions from the Federal Republic of Germany and other Western countries were being jammed in clear violation of the provisions of the Final Act.

16. His country for years had been foremost among the States which contributed both bilaterally and multilaterally to the establishment of efficient media systems in the third world. In 1979 alone, it had provided more than \$20 million for that purpose. It sought to enable developing countries to play an increasingly active role in the world-wide exchange of information through their own media systems and thereby bring about a more evenly balanced exchange of information between industrial and developing countries. His delegation appreciated the legitimate desire of the developing countries to render a greater contribution to the diversity of information by reporting on their own problems and needs and transmitting that information by means of their own media systems. In that regard, he noted with satisfaction the statement by the representative of Singapore that the countries of the third world were not seeking to curtail the activities of the developed countries in order to overcome the communication gap between North and South but were, on the contrary, anxious to obtain their assistance.

17. The efforts to establish a new international information and communication order should be based on the principle of freedom of opinion and information, and should aim at the speediest possible development of efficient communication infrastructures in developing countries. In order to strengthen international trust, nations must know more about one another, not less. The world, therefore, needed more freedom of the press, not less.

18. Mr. CARAMURU DE PAIVA (Brazil) said that the position of his country on the question of information, as expressed during the general debate in the Committee on Information, was based on three general principles: freedom of information, the existence of multiple sources of information, and restricted and qualified participation by States in information activities. States had the duty to create the necessary conditions for the full exercise of the right of freedom of information.

19. Of the various suggestions made in the reports of the Committee on Information and of its Working Group, those which aimed solely at improving the quality of basic services already rendered by DPI and other organs could be implemented immediately. Others, however, which had financial implications and introduced changes in the United Nations information system itself, should be given detailed consideration. His delegation was pleased to note the co-operation established between DPI and UNESCO and hoped that it would be strengthened in future in accordance with resolution 34/182. JUMIC had done good work in co-ordinating the information activities of the various United Nations organs.

20. On the question of United Nations information centres, several recommendations contained in document A/35/21 were worthy of support. While the centres must act

(Mr. Caramuru De Paiva, Brazil)

according to the requirements of their jurisdictions, it was essential for DPI to continue to establish general procedures for the activities of the whole network. The centres should be in close and permanent contact with Governments. Centres located in developing countries should be encouraged to publicize national development activities carried out with United Nations assistance. Efforts should be made to implement all those new proposals within the limits of available resources, taking into consideration the over-all revision to be made by the Secretary-General of the role and functions of the centres within DPI's structure.

21. While it might be useful to adopt a regional approach to the production and dissemination of information materials, his delegation had serious doubts about the establishment of regional information centres which would represent an additional financial burden without any commensurate increase in efficiency. The linguistic factor should not be overlooked; materials produced in Portuguese, for instance, could be utilized by countries in at least three different regions. While thanking the Secretariat for work already done in Portuguese, he called for an expansion of such work, in view of the number of Portuguese-speaking member countries.

22. Efforts made by DPI and other organs to improve co-operation with the developing countries, in spite of limited resources, were particularly encouraging. The programme of scholarships and training set forth in document A/35/603, while modest in scope, met with the approval of his delegation which hoped that it would be augmented in the future.

23. Brazil continued to support the establishment of a new information and communication order and its goal of reducing the gap between developed and developing countries in terms of information and communication. The order should take into account the basic principle of respect for the sovereignty of States, in order to safeguard national competence in the adoption of internal measures in the field of information. The debates of the Committee and of its Working Group represented only a first step towards the establishment of the new information order. The gratifying participation of the representatives of several United Nations organs, and their statements during the debates, offered significant evidence of their willingness to take part in the project. In future, the Committee should deal with more specific questions relating to the establishment of the new order and should explore further the ideas contained in part C of the recommendations of the Working Group.

24. Mr. BACHROUCH (Tunisia) said that the Committee's current consideration of United Nations policies and activities in the field of information and communication should help better to define and consolidate the activities of UNESCO, the Committee on Information and other international and regional organizations. The goal of all such activities was to restructure existing relations in the field of information through the establishment of a more just and better-balanced order that would benefit people everywhere.

25. It was a universally recognized fact that national independence and development and international peace and solidarity would be held in check so long as the developing countries were prevented from making their voices heard, from defending

(Mr. Bachrouch, Tunisia)

their political and economic interests and from asserting their own cultural identity. Moreover, it was interesting to note that the international community had understood the full scope and impact of information and had enthusiastically supported the idea of a new world information order. Such support reflected the growing realization that no human community could achieve fulfilment without true dialogue and balanced, impartial communication.

26. Tunisia was constantly seeking to encourage international co-operation in the field of information, on the basis of the provisions of the Charter and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its efforts to that end had been motivated by an objective analysis of the injustices and inequalities existing in the field of information throughout the world.

27. The determined efforts of the developing countries to promote a new world order, and their proposal that information and its role in human relations should be reconsidered, were starting to show results. Moreover, the importance which questions relating to information had in the lives of individuals and of peoples was apparent in the intensity of recent discussions on such questions. That importance stemmed from a profound social and political need shared by all human communities - a vital need, which was an essential factor in human development despite the unfounded reservations and allegations to the contrary, which generally reflected prejudiced attitudes towards the third world or selfish interests.

28. Open, sincere dialogue was necessary in order to eliminate ambiguities and promote understanding by radically transforming existing attitudes and creating an awareness of the legitimate concerns of all sides. In that connexion, his delegation had been pleased to note that the twenty-first UNESCO General Conference has given the developing countries an opportunity to show that their efforts were based on a sincere search for true solidarity. During its twenty-first General Conference, UNESCO had laid the foundations for constructive co-operation among all sides. Now, every effort must be made to achieve tangible results as soon as possible. That was how Tunisia had interpreted the consensus reached at the General Conference; and he stressed his country's hope that that consensus would quickly lead to global action, at the level of ideas, objectives and actual infrastructures, in the field of information. The international programme for the development of communication provided a valid framework for such efforts; the implementation of the programme and the developed countries' contribution to it would also offer a reliable test of the value of such a consensus.

29. The growing interest displayed by Member States in the activities of the Department of Public Information could provide the Department with a necessary stimulus in carrying out its tasks. Such interest also reflected the General Assembly's desire to improve the way in which United Nations policies and activities in the field of information were managed. The Secretariat's role in that effort was to prepare programmes and to make the necessary arrangements for the implementation of all the recommendations adopted by the General Assembly. His delegation believed that major, even crucial, improvements could be made in DPI, within the limits of existing staff and financial resources but, obviously, it did not rule out the approval of additional appropriations to such an important Department, which had been obliged substantially to expand both its activities and its structure.

(Mr. Bachrouch, Tunisia)

30. The report of the Committee on Information contained suggestions and recommendations that should guide the Secretariat in its tasks. He hoped that, within a reasonable period of time, the Secretariat would provide the Committee with more complete details about the measures to be taken in accordance with such decisions, particularly those relating to the recruitment of staff members from the developing countries for higher level posts, as well as the broadcasting of radio programmes to South Africa, the establishment of continuous short-wave broadcasts and, above all, the elaboration of a more audacious strategy for the strengthening of relations with the mass media in those developed countries that displayed the greatest resistance to United Nations activities.
31. Clearly, the United Nations must have a more effective information system, including its own broadcasting capacity, in order to reach the world public more easily. Accordingly, his delegation recommended that the Secretariat should undertake a study of the possibilities of establishing United Nations short-wave broadcasts and using the international system of satellites for United Nations television broadcasts to developing countries.
32. Mr. HMEDA (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) expressed full support for the recommendations contained in the report of the Director-General of UNESCO transmitted in the note by the Secretary-General (A/35/362). Questions relating to information and mass communication had an important effect on international relations and on security and peace throughout the world. The United Nations had special responsibilities in that respect since, in addition to informing the public about its activities and mobilizing international opinion for the achievement of its goals, the Organization must also undertake a wider dissemination of information regarding the positions adopted by Member States on political, economic, social and other problems.
33. A review of United Nations information activities should have been undertaken a long time ago in view of the increasing importance of information, particularly with regard to the implementation of international resolutions concerning socio-economic development. Information could play a primary role in promoting international socio-economic co-operation and strengthening the political, economic and cultural independence of Member States.
34. In view of the currently inadequate co-operation among the mass communications media, and because of the problems arising from the limited technical experience of the developing countries, his country was in favour of the establishment of a new world information order which would help to free the economies of the smaller countries and to redefine their role in the world economy. Socio-economic co-operation and development was being impeded by the developed countries' hegemony over the various information media. In his view, therefore, assistance should be provided to help the developing countries eliminate that economic and cultural monopoly by counteracting the adverse influence exercised by information media antagonistic to the aspirations of the developing countries, and by putting an end to the one-sided flow of information which was incompatible with the informational needs of peoples and turned the developing countries into mere consumers of information. His country was still suffering from an unjust situation, in which many of the information media subject to imperialist hegemony were attempting to misrepresent the positions adopted by the Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

(Mr. Hmeda, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

35. Every country which respected human rights must stress the principle of freedom of information, without which information would be monopolized and turned into mere propaganda. Instead of allowing information media to monopolize the distribution of world news in accordance with their own interests, countries should help to establish a new world information order for the promotion of peaceful socio-economic development. He emphasized the need for an international agreement to regulate the use of direct visual broadcasting, in a manner compatible with national sovereignty and with the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, in order to avoid misrepresentation of the cultural and social heritage of the developing countries.

36. His country proposed the formulation of a model plan for co-operation and assistance in the use and improvement of national information systems and mass communication networks in order to promote cultural progress and development. Libya also supported the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development and, in particular, the comments reflected in paragraph 22 of the report (A/35/362) to the effect that national communication policies could not fail to take into account their socio-cultural framework or the socio-economic consequences of the modernization or expansion of communications systems. In that connexion, UNESCO, in collaboration with the Committee on Information and DPI, would play a central role in the establishment of a new world information order based on equality, justice and respect for the heritage, values and histories of peoples.

37. The success or failure of the new world information order depended on the good intentions and altruistic attitudes of the States Members of the United Nations, since the Organization alone could not meet the information needs of world public opinion. The widest possible dissemination of information concerning the aims and activities of the United Nations at the national and international levels was the responsibility of all States, and national institutions must play a positive role in that respect.

38. As a developing country possessing links with various international news agencies, Libya, which was closely following developments in information, particularly with regard to the work of the United Nations, had welcomed the opening of a United Nations information centre in its capital in January 1980; and joint endeavours were underway to transmit news and information to the Libyan public. In view of the importance of United Nations information centres, they should be provided with adequate support and resources, particularly in the developing countries.

39. He called upon the Director-General of UNESCO and the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to rectify the current imbalance by promoting a wider use of the Arabic language. He also expressed the hope that the Arabic section of the Department of Public Information would be supported in its work and provided with the necessary resources to enable it to transmit news and information in a more positive manner.

(Mr. Hmeda, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

40. He also supported the recommendation of the Committee on Information concerning priorities and programmes of the Department of Public Information, and advocated the adoption of urgent measures to rectify the current geographical imbalance in the staffing of the Department of Public Information in order to permit increased participation by staff members from developing countries at higher decision-making levels in accordance with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations.

41. Mr. RUPIA (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation firmly believed that the quest for a new world information and communication order should be regarded as a corollary of the search for a new international economic order, because both concepts were based on the need to eliminate existing inequities and imbalances in relations among States. However, the developing nations' commitment to the establishment of a more just international information and communication order was viewed with suspicion by the developed countries, particularly those of the West, which maintained that such an order would compromise "freedom of the press". The Western concept of such freedom implied that the press was free to gather facts, analyse them and report them with cold objectivity; but such an "unhindered" flow of information reflected unmistakable hostility and scepticism towards the revolutionary changes and endogenous progress of the third world in general, and of Africa in particular. For example, that same "freedom of the press" in the West had described white deaths during the Zimbabwe liberation struggle as "massacres" but black deaths as "raids".

42. Moreover, it was important to view the free flow of information in the context of cold war politics, in which the nations of the third world, though largely lacking technical expertise and facilities, were searching for their own voice and perspective to offset those of the major Powers.

43. Thus it was important for the developed countries to understand why the third world wanted a new international information and communication order. First, the developed countries should widen their coverage of third world countries, focusing also on more positive development information, rather than on disasters. Secondly, third world countries must be able to control the importation of news and information emanating from the developed countries. For example, the imported press brought with it political and cultural values which altered behaviour and tended to disrupt the development goals of the third world. In short, the third world had a legitimate desire to control the flow of information.

44. The report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems had revealed that almost 90 per cent of all news and information in the world was gathered, edited and disseminated by giant international monopolistic news agencies; there was thus a one-way flow of world news - from the developed to the developing world. Because the developing countries lacked the necessary scientific technology and skilled manpower, they had no choice but to subscribe to such news agencies. Various United Nations reports had indicated that the selection and presentation of news by transnational news agencies were based on marketability rather than on objectivity or usefulness to development efforts. Consequently, the content of the information transmitted to the third world did not correspond to the real needs of the people there.

(Mr. Rupia, United Republic of Tanzania)

45. Tanzania's position on the new world information and communication order, like that of most non-aligned States, was very clear. Tanzania was in favour of a free, reciprocal, balanced flow of accurate, complete and objective information and the rectification of the qualitative and quantitative imbalances existing in the flow of information between developed and developing countries. In that connexion, his delegation appealed to Member States to act in accordance with the principles of the Charter, in particular the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States.

46. The relationship between information and human values must not be overlooked. Freedom of expression, thought and opinion were basic human rights, but every right had a corresponding duty. Accordingly, if the concept of the free flow of information required that a journalist should have free access to news agencies and that the public had a right to be informed, journalists also had a social responsibility to disseminate accurate and objective information to society.

47. Action to promote the establishment of a new, more just and more efficient, world information and communication order for the strengthening of peace and international understanding, based on the free circulation and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information, could be carried out at various levels simultaneously. At the national level, Member States should start by reorganizing their information media, both nationally and regionally, by investing heavily in the communication infrastructure, by encouraging bilateral and multilateral exchanges between media organizations, by promoting the growth of national or regional languages, by strengthening established structures within the non-aligned countries and by speaking with a single voice against the inadequacies of the current international information order.

48. At the international level, developed countries and international organizations should help in the establishment of national communication policies, for example by providing grants for research, and should furnish, technical and financial assistance to the developing countries to help them, inter alia, in the training of skilled personnel and to facilitate the organization of regional media conferences and seminars. In that connexion, Tanzania appreciated the valuable role played by UNESCO with a view to reducing existing imbalances. The recent twenty-first UNESCO General Conference had produced encouraging results, and his delegation welcomed the establishment of the international programme for the development of communication. The Intergovernmental Council of the programme, of which his country was to be a member, would provide a comprehensive means of identifying communication development requirements and matching available assistance with such requirements. Moreover, the resolutions adopted by the General Conference on information and mass communication made a valuable contribution to the quest for a new world information and communication order. Accordingly, implementation of those recommendations would help to relieve third world media of developmental problems - in terms of infrastructure, equipment, qualified personnel and financing - and would thus facilitate the balanced flow of information under the new world information and communication order.

49. With regard to the work of the Department of Public Information, in his delegation's opinion, the resources at its disposal should be increased in order to

(Mr. Rupia, United Republic of Tanzania)

make its future work more effective. His delegation also believed that the Secretariat and the Department should seek to achieve a more equitable geographical distribution of the staff. The absence of personnel from the developing countries at decision-making levels was too glaring to be ignored.

50. Moreover, the network of United Nations information centres should be strengthened. When competent personnel could not be recruited directly, the Secretariat and the Department should consult with the Member States concerned. Moreover, the Department should operate its own short-wave radio station and, in so doing, should ensure that Africa had the status of a full-fledged section, complete with the necessary, competent staff.

51. In conclusion, the report of the Committee on Information and of its Ad Hoc Working Group represented a positive contribution to the realization of a new world information and communication order, and his delegation supported the recommendations contained therein. Accordingly, he hoped that the United Nations and its agencies, in particular UNESCO, would implement those recommendations with the utmost diligence.

52. Mr. BENCHEKROUJ (Morocco) said that previous speakers had already framed an indictment of a particular kind of Western reporting and of its role in the shaping of public opinion, the behaviour of Governments and the manipulation of the masses. Such an analysis, although correct, was nevertheless biased since it reflected only one of the aspects of the problems faced by information. The greater the condemnation of the mass media of the West, the greater was the obligation to examine critically the acts and behaviour of countries which always found fault and always sought to redress wrongs. Their mass media also, by erroneous and biased interpretation, by their silence on events known to everyone except their own people and by blind obedience to Government directives, contributed to the misinformation of the masses and to misunderstanding and hostility between men. The result in the long run, was hostility directed against themselves. Those who had made a habit of denouncing incitement to hatred and war suddenly found themselves tarred with the same brush as those they had accused.

53. On the question of the use of the limited resources of countries whose information media were still in the stage of development, a certain circumspection was essential to say the least. Principles for which so many had struggled had become prohibitions. Freedom of information, of expression and of movement - principles which had had the status of dogma in the heroic era - had been swept away by revolutions or forgotten in the comfort of power. There was a great disparity between the principles and slogans of yesterday and the reality of today. The mass media had been diverted from their principal aim of providing free and objective information and thus contributing to the education of the masses. Fortunately, a number of developing countries had begun to have a sounder understanding of the role of information, as evinced by their current interest in problems of communication and information. The developing countries could make an important contribution to the solution of those problems. There was no single solution, given that human nature was as it was and that human society was fortunately rich in diversity.

(Mr. Bencheikroun, Morocco)

54. World information problems were of such complexity - touching as they did the foundations of human society, human instincts, antagonism between civilizations, political systems, ideals and ideologies - that it was impossible to reduce them all to a single formula: in an attempt to achieve the impossible. The present formulation - "new world information order" - was indeed of historical value and importance but would, in the opinion of his delegation, be more widely accepted if it were always qualified by the words "more just and more efficient". To speak of a new world information order without so qualifying it would be to deny those differences and diversities which were so enriching and which had made human civilization what it was today. It would be tantamount to assuming that all world problems were resolved and differences abolished, and to believing in the advent of a messianic age without contradictions and struggles. There could be no definitive order, good or bad, but only an improvement of that which existed and which had been inherited from those who had gone before. The formulation "new, more just and more efficient world information order" accurately reflected the desired evolution and the improvement which all wished to see in their information systems; and it deserved the support of all who agreed with the third world that the present system could not last forever.

55. In any country, the degree of development of information, and its intellectual and technical level, depended on the degree of development of education and culture. The more a society was materially, intellectually and socially developed, the more antagonisms there were and the more diversified were the means for their expression. The development of information should not proceed too quickly. The attraction of certain technologies should not be allowed to conceal the dangers which they might hold for the future. Sophisticated technologies seemed to belong only to those who had the necessary scientific and technological capacity. Given the ideologies peculiar to each of them, countries ran the risk of siding with one or other of the two systems or of falling completely under their domination. The only salvation was to remain oneself, faithful to one's own opinions and ideas.

56. On the question of responsibility in the matter of information, he said that that concept in no way excluded those of freedom of expression or freedom of thought. Placing too much stress on the concept of responsibility alone led to political and administrative restrictions and ultimately to censorship. Responsibility in information was an appropriate concept which would benefit from being better understood by all, since it was always present.

57. It was quite legitimate to wish to acquire information and mass communications technology, as part of the transfer of technology from the developed world which the developing world was trying to bring about by peaceful means. Communication was a double-edged sword which could be of service and of disservice to a society, as the Director-General of UNESCO had pointed out in his report. It could also be an instrument of rapprochement and understanding; it could promote tolerance and diminish tension between societies and individuals. For that reason, His Majesty King Hassan II of Morocco had always promoted freedom of opinion and freedom of expression and ensured the free circulation of ideas, possessions and human beings. The King of Morocco was also convinced that in the modern world it was no longer possible to live, to express oneself, to think, to use modern means

(Mr. Benchekroun, Morocco)

of communication or to obtain access to information technology, without letting others to do likewise. Such was the foundation of the so-called new world information order and of true democracy. The present situation of the mass media in Morocco testified to that fact, and gave promise of continual improvement.

58. Access to new means of information called for a high degree of social conscience and political responsibility. As was stated in paragraph 21 of the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communication Development, the disparity in communication between different countries would not be eliminated by the mere material development of infrastructures and professional resources and by the transfer of technology. The solution depended also upon the elimination of all political, ideological, psychological, economic and technical obstacles and upon a freer, wider and more balanced exchange of information.

59. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General in document A/35/504, there had been protests and complaints about certain services of the Department of Public Information, particularly its radio and television services. He hoped that those protests were rumours without serious foundation and that the Department would implement the recommendations concerning geographic and linguistic balance. The statement in paragraph 12 of document A/35/504 to the effect that the process was slow and hence there was a need for patience, was not altogether appropriate. There were certainly ways of doing justice without committing injustices.

60. The United Nations information centres had the immense task of disseminating and explaining the decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly. However, he objected to the paternalistic tone of the statement in paragraph 43 of the annex to document A/35/21, to the effect that "in the case of United Nations information centres located in developing regions, it was noted that they could play an ever increasing educational role". If there were populations in need of education, they were certainly those sections of the populations of the two polarized blocs which shared the world between them and refused to understand the problems of apartheid, racial discrimination and Palestine. The information centres should be more active, at least in the Western world, in exercising their educational function. The effect of the centres on Western public opinion would influence Government decisions in those countries. He was sure that DPI would show a new spirit and undertake the necessary changes in its working methods.

61. Mr. OULD HAYE (Mauritania) expressed his support for the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information. The establishment of a new world information order was of paramount importance, especially for the developing countries, and should therefore be an integral part of the work undertaken by the international community to create a more equitable system of relationships based on global co-operation and the harmonious development of international relations.

62. The new order must be based on the free circulation and balanced dissemination of information on the widest possible scale, and he was pleased to note that a general consensus had been reached on that point, as was indicated in paragraph 23

(Mr. Ould Hays, Mauritania)

of the report. The new order would, to a large extent, be achieved through the strengthening of the information and communication media of the developing countries. The colonial heritage, inadequacies of technical infrastructure and lack of financial and human resources had turned the developing countries into consumers of information that was often ill adapted to their needs. It was deplorable that information concerning the developing countries was so often centred on conflicts and other sensational events, and that so little attention was given to their patient development efforts and their struggle against hunger, disease and ignorance.

63. Modernization of information media in the developing countries required the establishment of national communication policies, the strengthening of regional and subregional co-operation and active support from developed countries in the provision of the necessary infrastructures, equipment and technical training. In that respect, the United Nations was playing an encouraging role which should be continued with a view to the elimination of racism, apartheid and colonialism and the establishment of peace, international understanding, respect for human rights and a commitment to socio-economic development. The immensity of that undertaking required participation, co-operation and co-ordination among all the organs of the United Nations system.

64. He welcomed the programmes and measures adopted by the Department of Public Information with a view to promoting a more just world information order, and was confident that efforts to restructure the Department would continue to emphasize the principle of equitable geographical and linguistic distribution. The role played by the Arabic language in that Department should, in view of its importance, also be reviewed.

65. Mr. THEODORACOPOULOS (Greece) said that the quest for freedom of information was not a new phenomenon exclusive to modern technologically developed societies, since it dated back to the time of the Athenian Republic when freedom of thought, opinion and expression and the free flow of news and ideas were strictly respected. That concept was based on human dignity and, as stated by Demosthenes, freedom of expression was an absolute human right of all citizens. He was pleased to note that such principles were reflected in many international instruments and studies such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Mass Media Declaration of UNESCO, the Yaoundé Declaration and the report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems.

66. Although the new information order must be based on freedom of information, such freedom must be associated with a commitment to truthfulness, accuracy and respect for human rights which could not be imposed by decree, censorship or arbitrary control of information. Such values could be guaranteed only through free access to a full range of news sources and opinions, as had been reaffirmed in the resolutions adopted during the last General Conference of UNESCO at Belgrade. In that respect, he emphasized the central role of UNESCO as the forum, initiator and catalyst of the world debate on communications. He expressed support for the resolution adopted at Belgrade concerning the need for immediate action to redress the imbalance between the developing and developed countries in the field of communication.

(Mr. Theodoropoulos, Greece)

67. With regard to the report of the Committee on Information, urgent attention should be given to the recommendations concerning (a) measures to redress the current geographical imbalance in the staff of DPI, (b) the support to be given for the development of the mass media infrastructure in developing countries, (c) the training of journalists and broadcasting personnel, and (d) the improvement of the functioning of United Nations information centres.
68. In conclusion, he expressed support for the proposal made by the French and Italian representatives concerning the One World supplement published by 16 important newspapers including the Greek paper To Vima. He hoped that the Committee would devote one of its forthcoming meetings to a discussion of that issue.
69. Mr. GARRIGUES (Spain) observed that, superficially, the current discussion seemed to reflect three clearly defined and to a certain extent opposing positions: that of the Western countries which stressed the fact that the press had the right and duty to inform society, and the need for a free flow of information in accordance with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; that of the socialist countries, which held that information should be used to serve peace and the liberation of peoples and which stressed that the concept of freedom must be coupled with the concept of responsibility; and lastly, that of the developing countries, which felt that questions of information were closely connected with the establishment of a new international economic order and that an improvement in the field of communications would therefore be reflected in a better balanced world economic situation. However, such positions were not irreconcilable; indeed, recent General Assembly resolutions in the field of information, the recommendations of the Committee on Information and the important decisions and resolutions of UNESCO had all been adopted by consensus.
70. In his delegation's opinion, the general principle of freedom of expression, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and recognized in the Spanish Constitution, was the key to all information systems. Any effort to elaborate a new, more just and a more efficient international information and communication order must be based on the free circulation and wide and better-balanced dissemination of such information, while ensuring that each country maintained its cultural and social identity. His delegation did not think that censorship or impediments to the freedom of information would ever be conducive to the establishment of a more just and more peaceful world.
71. Several Western delegations had stressed that the principle of freedom and that of responsibility should be complementary; but in so doing they had denied the basic opposition between the two concepts. His delegation had welcomed the remarks made by the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Committee on Information to the effect that the Working Group's activities had been based on absolute respect for freedom of information as one of the fundamental human rights.
72. By the same token, the alleged dichotomy between freedom of information and the legitimate concern for national economic and social development needed to be qualified in many ways. Above all, it was necessary to control the trend towards verbal escalation, which frequently rendered mutual understanding more difficult.

(Mr. Garrigues, Spain)

73. Even within the communication systems of countries considered to share similar social and cultural levels, it was not surprising to find imbalances; and as a result of such imbalances the information structure of one country could not automatically be applied to the public of another country. As the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO had said, greater emphasis should be placed on endogenous development, focusing on different cultural and economic situations and adapting such development to the real needs of each society.

74. The relationship between the new international information and communication order and the establishment of a new international economic order had been described in detail in the conclusions adopted at the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries in 1976. The developing countries were currently facing an emergency situation in two respects: on the one hand, they urgently needed to attain an adequate level of development; and on the other hand, in order to attain that level, their information media must emerge from the embryonic state. Fortunately, the United Nations system was already acquiring the means to enable those countries to achieve real development in the field of information. The International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems had submitted to the recent UNESCO General Conference a very complete picture of the different tendencies and needs existing throughout the world with a view to finding ways to establish a new world information order. Moreover, the General Conference had established an international programme for the development of communication to assist developing countries in the elaboration and implementation of their information and communication development plans and to promote in developing countries, according to their communication policies and development plans, the creation or extension of infrastructures for the different communication sectors.

75. In that context, the programme of fellowships and scholarships for journalists and broadcasting personnel from the developing countries contained in document A/35/603 was especially interesting. Mention should also be made of the publication by 16 major newspapers from four continents, in co-operation with the United Nations system, of the One World supplement which was precisely designed to present the problems relating to the establishment of a new international economic order and to promote in-depth dialogue between countries with different levels of development.

76. Among the documents and specific suggestions before the Committee, his delegation attached particular importance to measures to correct the current geographical imbalance in the staff of the Department of Public Information, particularly in the higher-level posts - a situation to which both General Assembly resolution 34/182 and the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group had drawn attention. Several delegations, including those of Colombia, Venezuela and Uruguay, had also stressed that problem during the current general debate. Document A/C.5/35/L.13 on personnel questions aroused real concern about the small number of staff members from Spanish-speaking countries and, more specifically, staff members of Spanish nationality. For example, there was only one Spanish staff member at the P-3 level in the Publications Service and two others in the Visitors Section. Those figures obviously seemed inadequate, given the importance of the Spanish language throughout the world and Spain's contribution to the Organization.

(Mr. Garrigues, Spain)

77. It was also important to ensure the necessary balance in the use of official languages in DPI publications.

78. With regard to the general operations of DPI, his delegation was interested in the plans to achieve greater selectivity and efficiency in the Department's services; and it supported the views expressed by other delegations to the effect that maximum use should be made of available resources before existing means and resources were expanded.

79. The Committee on Information, without renouncing the broad mandate entrusted to it in connexion with the new world information order, might achieve more positive results by limiting activities to a few specific objectives and establishing a realistic order of priorities, rather than by creating new, sophisticated means of communication. By carrying out the necessary rationalization and achieving greater efficiency, it would be possible to make the general public familiar with the daily work of the United Nations, and not only with major issues, on which it was especially difficult to obtain spectacular results. In that connexion, he supported the statement made by the representative of Colombia, who had requested that existing information networks should be used to ensure a broader dissemination of information about the subjects dealt with in the various committees.

80. In conclusion, his delegation welcomed the improved publication of the UN Chronicle in different languages simultaneously; and he drew attention to the fact that, during the previous session of the Assembly, his delegation had voted for the revised appropriations for that specific purpose.

81. As was indicated in one of the early chapters of the book entitled Many Voices One World, published by UNESCO, the human imagination occupied a central place in the global process of communication. Imagination was also necessary in order to overcome extremist positions and to move towards compromise within the Committee. The Department of Public Information needed imagination to enable it, with a limited budget and in response to the growing demand of various organizations, to disseminate an image of the United Nations. Imagination was also necessary in order to find simple solutions to complex problems, to understand fully that people lived in one world but had very different voices and to realize that that world was not standing still.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.