



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda)
later: Mrs. NOWOTNY (Austria)

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SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 67: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)
(A/36/21, 504, 530)

- (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

1. Mr. GONZALES (Mexico) said that the spread of colonialism had caused systematic destruction of the cultures of the subject peoples, the imposition of new modes of social organization and the introduction of mechanisms for perpetuating structures alien not only to indigenous values but to the true interests of those peoples. One of those mechanisms was the establishment of an information order that reflected the prevailing economic, political and technological inequalities between developed and developing countries. The developing countries were therefore engaged in an action campaign to secure the restoration or safeguarding of their right to inform and be informed. The establishment of a new world information order formed part of those efforts and was of fundamental importance for the full enjoyment of independence, autonomy and self-determination by most of the population of the planet.

2. His Government, believing that the right to information, from both the individual and the social viewpoints, was a further aspect of the exercise of the principle of self-determination, had adopted measures to make that right a constitutional one. That explained Mexico's consistent support for the efforts of the international community to establish a new world information order, an undertaking that presupposed an adequate legal framework which would guide the process.

3. Mexico itself had made a contribution to establishing the Pool of Non-aligned News Agencies; it was a member of the Pool and consistently supported it. During November the second session of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communications was to be held in Mexico, as a further step in the difficult but necessary process of change. Nevertheless, however sophisticated information technology might be, its content and orientation would become more rational only to the extent to which their intellectual and physical production and their final acceptance by public opinion in every State and in the international community as a whole, became more democratic. Only thus, through increased participation of better-informed men and women in the

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(Mr. Gonzales, Mexico)

processes of social communication, could progress be made towards the establishment of a more just and effective information order.

4. Mr. ZUBIRIA (Colombia) said that the reforms in connexion with the use of satellites for the broadcasting of television programmes, having been the result of a proposal by Colombia, had received decisive support from developing countries and had subsequently been approved by consensus by the General Assembly in resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980. The project had been included in the recommendations of the Committee on Information. It was expected that the annual cost of executing it would be very low and that, in the first phase, it might cover 54 countries and a potential audience of 75 million. However, that technological innovation needed to have an equally innovative content so as to reach not only developing countries but the industrialized world. His delegation had accordingly proposed that in the near future the three satellites of the INTELSAT system and, if possible those of the INTERSPUTNIK system, should be used as an effective means of promoting the activities and thinking of the United Nations and keeping world opinion informed of them. That would be the first step towards the creation by the United Nations of its own system of communications satellites.

5. In conclusion, he said, on the subject of freedom of information, that whereas totalitarian régimes believed that truth was a single entity and was possessed by the State, democratic régimes sought the truth and to that end demanded the basic personal freedoms: freedom of thought, action, assembly, association, expression and information. The last of those freedoms had been opposed by the enemies of democracy in many ways, one of which, terrorism, had come on the scene during the previous decade. It was clear, however, that there was currently an intensification of terrorist acts throughout the world as well as more intensive publicity concerning those acts. Consequently, the very future of free information clearly depended on how definitively and clearly the line could be drawn between what was purely informative and what was manifestly sensationalist.

6. Mr. SINGH (India) referred to the pioneering role of UNESCO in the field of information and communication and to the useful work done by the Committee on Information since its inception in 1979. India had an active association with both.

7. His delegation attached considerable importance to the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communications which, in its view, constituted an important step in the development of the communications infrastructure in the developing countries and, as had been stated by the Director-General of UNESCO, held out "great hope of improving understanding between

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(Mr. Singh, India)

peoples and nations by ushering in a new era of international co-operation in communication" (A/36/530, appendix II).

8. He pointed out that in the early 1970s India had taken a leading role in the establishment of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, which had been a significant step in correcting the imbalance existing in the contemporary world in the field of information and communication. In that context, making available data on the existing capacities of developing countries to undertake economic and technical co-operation, on the one hand, and the means of exchange and dissemination of information, on the other, were complementary activities which, in his delegation's view, should be seen as an integrated whole in the realization of the new international economic order. The Ministerial Conference of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi in February 1981, had re-emphasized the importance of the interrelationship between information and communication systems and developmental processes in the developing countries. The increased co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies was noteworthy in that connexion.

9. In conclusion, he said that it was essential to ensure equitable participation of personnel from all countries, especially from the developing countries in the Department of Public Information, particularly in posts at the senior and decision-making levels. A further requirement was to encourage the non-governmental organizations which represented an invaluable network for the dissemination of information for the Department. He reaffirmed his delegation's continued co-operation with the Committee on Information and UNESCO for the attainment of their ultimate objectives, namely, a new more just and more effective world information and communications order.

10. Mr. SHAMMA (Jordan) said that the report of the Secretary-General (A/36/504) and the report of the Committee on Information (A/36/21) left much to be desired, notwithstanding the recommendations in part IV of the latter report. They gave the impression that the new world information and communications order lay somewhere between the free flow of diverse views on information and changing the dependent status of the developing countries, between the public information activities of the United Nations and the geographical regionalization of the Department of Public Information's staff, but without submitting any clear-cut plan of action or even a timetable of the stages leading up to a new information order.

11. His delegation proposed that a group of experts of the Committee on Information, representing all the regional groups, should be established. Such a group would be instructed to study the recommendations in document A/36/21 and transform them into a programme of action within the framework of a long-term strategy that would be

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(Mr. Shamma, Jordan)

in line with the goals and aspirations of achieving a new world information and communications order. The new group would define the priorities of a few well-studied projects within the limitations of available resources. It should also be able to draw up short-term plans for the implementation of those projects. The Secretary-General should be invited to appeal to Member States to make contributions to a special fund to help DPI to carry out the projects. He realized that his proposal would need to be refined once the General Assembly had endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information.

12. Turning to information in general, he said that information was a powerful element in the daily lives of individuals, peoples and nations. His country believed in the free flow of information and ideas not as an end but as a means to educate and contribute to the well-being of mankind. The United Nations should play an active part by monitoring scientific, educational, cultural, social and economic information. United Nations activities should be made known as a means to promote the information that could play a vital role in the lives of people. He suggested that the Secretary-General should request Member States to allocate during every General Assembly session half an hour every two weeks on their national radio and television stations to the broadcasting of information about United Nations activities on the basis of material supplied by the Department of Public Information.

13. Mr. AZAZY (Yemen), said that Yemen, a small developing country and a member of the Group of 77, was directly and indirectly affected by the activities of the mass communication media, as were other developing countries. It was necessary to correct the inequitable geographical distribution of personnel in the Department of Public Information, so that all regions would be adequately represented in the Department. Developing countries would then be better informed about United Nations activities and could make use of the information received for the benefit of their own countries. As was stated in paragraph 36 of the report of the Committee on Information (A/36/21), many delegations were in favour of ensuring that the posts within the Department were equitably distributed among the geographical regions as soon as possible.

14. With respect to the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division, the plan proposed by the Secretariat did not seem designed to achieve the objective of regionalization and, in addition, was cumbersome. His delegation could not accept interpretations of regionalization which differed from what was laid down in General Assembly resolution 34/201.

15. The establishment of a new world information and communication order was of great economic, social and political importance for all

(Mr. Azazy, Yemen)

countries and, in particular, for developing countries. It was necessary to create such an order with a view to: first, eliminating the dependence of developing countries in the field of communications; second, encouraging a free distribution of objective and more balanced information and news; thirdly, creating a climate conducive to the circulation of news reports; and, fourthly, guaranteeing the contribution of DPI to the establishment of the new world order.

16. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt) said that the report of the Committee on Information realistically reflected the ideas prevailing in the Committee and, while it did not overlook differences of approach and conflicting positions, had the merit of focusing on issues on which there was general agreement; the need for information to circulate in both directions and for it to promote peace, international co-operation and security and strengthen freedom and human, political, economic and cultural rights.

17. The information media had a vital role to play, not only in analysing international situations, but also in reducing tension and checking the deterioration in international relations. At the same time, information must alert people to the objective causes of that deterioration. It must inform the public of the cause/effect relationship and, in addition, the relationship between appearances and determining factors.

18. When speaking of a new information and communication order, it was important to take account of the differences and contradictions that characterize the various political and economic approaches in the modern world. The variety of human experience should not be an impediment but rather should constitute a source of enrichment. In the history of mankind, the genius of creation and innovation had been stimulated not by uniformity and similarity but by diversity and variety.

19. The new information and communication order could not be set up in terms of simple opposition between East and West or between one country and other. It must replace and supersede the present limited positions and must not be constituted by the perpetuation of any of them. Each system had its own logic, its own philosophy and its own wisdom; what was required was a genuine balance between the values of all. The value of freedom must be moderated with that of responsibility, which should be understood as the moral and ethical obligation of individuals and societies. However, responsibility, as a vital dimension of the new international information and communication order, should not be conceived of as a factor of rigidity, since to do so would sap creativity or deny freedom of independent creative thought.

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(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

20. Egypt had been a member of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries for the past 20 years and was fully aware that the Movement was today confronted with problems whose nature and seriousness differed from those originally encountered. Because of the fresh problems in the world today, which were undermining the very principles of the Movement, it was necessary to have reliable information which, while free from preconceived ideas, was responsive to the causes of peace, freedom and progress. Egypt believed in the need for a new system whose objective was peace based on justice. Such a system should stem from the firm conviction that peaceful co-existence was possible and should be imbued with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It should endeavour to humanize information, not politicize it, and must work for peace and understanding among peoples.

21. Referring to the first part of the Committee's report, concerning the policies and activities undertaken in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 35/201, he said that the geographical distribution of personnel in the Department of Public Information was a crucial matter which required constant vigilance. His delegation noted with satisfaction that paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's report (A/36/504) stated that progress was being made towards improved geographical balance, especially in senior posts. That trend must continue and account should be taken of geographical and linguistic factors, together with those relating to the competence of personnel.

22. United Nations information centres constituted points of communication with the public and, in order for them to carry out effectively the policy of decentralizing information activities, their independence, responsibilities and capacity for flexible action must be strengthened, especially in developing countries and countries which had newly emerged.

23. Egypt supported the plan for the regionalization of the activities of the Radio and Visual Services Division of DPI, in accordance with the mandate laid down in General Assembly resolution 35/201. The plan not only would correct existing imbalances but also would contribute to efficiency in the performance of services.

24. The budget for the biennium 1982-1983 should provide the necessary resources for the broad distribution of information material, such as the film Agenda for a Small Planet. Every effort should be made to ensure that that type of dissemination continued and that co-operation links were established with the national centres concerned with documentary films, in order to derive full benefit from the considerable substantive material available and the existing technical potential.

25. The medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989 should provide for measures that would permit a high degree of flexibility and

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(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

adaptability. It was quite possible that in the next few years accelerated economic and social changes would add new perspectives to existing causes and concerns and would require the reordering of priorities.

26. In that context, continuing co-ordination with the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs was extremely important. It was also necessary to strengthen the publication of Development Forum and, at the same time, to reinforce the information campaigns of the Department of Public Information in the social and economic fields and the Department's promotion of United Nations programmes.

27. As to the second part of the report of the Committee on Information, concerning the evaluation and follow-up of the efforts made by the United Nations system in the field of information and communication, Egypt attached great importance to participation by the specialized agencies in those activities and to their co-operation with the Committee in order to enable the latter to fulfil its mandate in improved conditions and carry out its policies.

28. It was necessary to emphasize the crucial role of UNESCO, which, through its International Programme for Development of Communications, could provide direct and effective help in establishing solid foundations for the new international information and communication order. Bonds of close co-operation must be formed between UNESCO, the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information; such co-operation would, without a doubt, lead to better and more objective results.

29. With regard to the report of the Director-General of UNESCO, contained in document A/36/530, the Egyptian delegation welcomed the information in paragraph 11 concerning the Council's decision to send a questionnaire to all member States in order to identify better their communication and information requirements. The Council would thus have a clearer idea of the priorities of communication development and could adjust or supplement, as necessary, the criteria for selecting projects.

30. With regard to the third part of the report, concerning the promotion of the establishment of a new world information and communication order, it should be pointed out that that need was very present in the consciousness of the developing countries, much more so than in that of other countries whose historical circumstances and development stages had given them much greater possibilities and much broader means for expressing their own opinions and effecting those of others. That had led to the rule of a system where the immediate interests of the developing countries had no echo. In the circumstances, what the developing countries asked for was in no way excessive and did not affect either the position or the tendencies of the developed countries. It was a legitimate and realistic quest for the affirmation of the ideas, problems, values

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(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

and civilization of the developing countries, which would eliminate the unjust state of dependence in which they found themselves. That did not mean that information should have characteristics of isolation, localism or narrowness of views. It was well known that the effects of communications were perceived across geographical and political boundaries and that worlds and images transcended all barriers. It was not, therefore, either necessary or possible to be isolated from the currents of ideas of civilization.

31. It would be necessary, when the conditions of the new information and communication order were established, for conflicts between east and west or between north and south to be overcome. The question should be considered very seriously, whether information was to be in the service of politics or, on the contrary, to have an even more transcendent destiny and be in the service of mankind and the essential values forged in the course of history. Rigid and empty stereotypes must be rejected and replaced by clear values and priorities in the service of the rights, dignity and independence of human beings, the awareness of the peoples and their right to freedom and independence.

32. Particularly commendable was the recommendation that the Department of Public Information, with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies of the non-aligned countries, as well as with regional news agencies of the developing countries. That would mean co-operation with more than 90 developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, in the service of their countries and their peoples. At the same time, bilateral co-operation with national information agencies should be strengthened; they had a vital and important role to play in the new information order. Those important aspects should be reflected in a draft resolution to be proposed by the Committee.

33. With regard to the training programmes for journalists and broadcasters from the developing countries, his delegation considered that that was a practical measure which deserved its full support, taking account of the fact that staff aware of their responsibilities satisfied one of the main conditions for the success of the new information order. Egypt was endeavouring at the national level to have information services which supported and disseminated the activities of the United Nations. Those services had merited the encouragement and support of the Department of Public Information, for which Egypt expressed its gratitude. It would be appropriate if that fruitful collaboration with national services was also reflected in a draft resolution of the Committee.

34. Mr. NG'ENY (Kenya) said that the Committee on Information had recommended a plan for regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division of the Department of Public Information, which was

(Mr. Ng'eny, Kenya)

contained in document A/AC.198/34. In that regard, the majority of delegates considered that it was necessary to take urgent measures to correct the present imbalance among the personnel of the Department of Public Information, especially with regard to senior posts, where vacancies should be filled with personnel from developing countries. His delegation recognized that budgetary constraints existed, which made the adoption of such measures difficult, but suggested that, if necessary, the Committee on Information should urge the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session to allocate additional funding for the Department of Public Information.

35. Kenya firmly believed in freedom of the press and considered also that the press should educate the people and promote an awareness of the need for positive development. One example of that function of the communication media was the exploitation of natural resources and rapid transmission of information through satellite broadcasting.

36. With regard to the question of international co-operation, the Second World War had revealed the importance of interdependence for the achievement of collective security. In that context, the countries of Africa had assigned a high order of priority to their economic development. As the President of Kenya had said, the international community could help Africa by contributing to the establishment of an environment of peace, stability and economic justice, the ideal complement to which would be a new more just and balanced international information and communication order.

37. His delegation noted with satisfaction the creation of an anti-apartheid section in the radio services division and the appointment of staff members from African countries to provide those services. With regard to short-wave broadcasts, his delegation urged the Secretary-General to expedite the compilation of the report for the General Assembly on those broadcasts, which would be effected from the United Nations facilities in New York. For the following year, a similar report was envisaged on frequency modulated broadcasts from United Nations Headquarters.

38. He paid a tribute to the work of the Department of Public Information for organizing a programme for third world journalists and broadcasters and urged the Special Political Committee to recommend to the Assembly continuation of that type of aid. Lastly, he expressed gratitude for the technical and financial aid received by Kenya for the improvement of its mass media facilities.

39. Mr. OTT (German Democratic Republic) said that the rapid progress of communications technology made it possible to disseminate an ever

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(Mr. Ott, German Democratic Republic)

greater volume of information, which influenced the course of national and international development. In view of that fact, the necessity of establishing international legal norms in that area was increasingly being highlighted. In his view, the key issue of the matter was the content of information, a decisive element for establishing a new world information and communication order. Those legal norms would have to eliminate the risk of misuse of information against peoples and point to possibilities of exploiting information for the good of international peace and understanding.

40. The concrete requirements to be met by the mass media had been enshrined in numerous documents, such as UNESCO's Mass Media Declaration, the McBride report, the resolutions of the UNESCO General Conference in Belgrade and relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, in which it was stated that relations in the field of information were part of international relations and, consequently, should follow the norms of international law.

41. He cited two examples of activities of the media and the requirements which they must meet. First, there was the Final Document of the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament, which made an appeal for the dissemination of information on the arms race, avenues towards disarmament and the creation of a favourable climate for disarmament. In the second document, emanating from the International Seminar on Publicity and Role of Mass Media in the International Mobilization against Apartheid, held in Berlin, it was stated that the media could not adopt a neutral position on apartheid.

42. The activities of his country's mass media had always been oriented towards such constructive objectives, to defend, ensure and continue the process of detente and to create a spiritual climate that was free of any Cold War elements.

43. The ideal of peace was the guideline for the German Democratic Republic's active participation in the efforts to bring about new democratic international relations in the field of information. Recently, those ideals had met with overt imperialist hostility, notably in the United States, according to which the new information order would create obstacles for a free press and for the free flow of information. In that connexion, it was common knowledge that a handful of trusts were in control of 80 to 90 per cent of the media for the gathering and dissemination of information and of the production and marketing of the technical means of transmission. The New Delhi Declaration of the Non-Aligned Countries pointed out that, when the information media were dominated and monopolized by a few, freedom of information really came to mean the freedom of

(Mr. Ott, German Democratic Republic)

those few to propagate information in the manner of their choosing and the virtual denial to the rest of the rights to inform and to be informed objectively and accurately. Striking examples of such misuse of media were the radio stations "Radio Free Europe" and "Radio Liberty", located, as was known, in the Western country that was a neighbour to the German Democratic Republic. Those radio stations broadcast in a provocative way programmes that were full of slander against the socialist countries, instigated counter-revolutionary circles and caused tension, which constituted a flagrant violation of international norms. Consequently, in the establishment of a new international information order, it was essential to eliminate the misuse of information by the media. That necessitated the elimination of the predominance of imperialist communication media monopolies and the establishment of national information and communication systems in the developing countries, whose objective was peace.

44. In organizing its work, the Department of Public Information was guided by the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and other United Nations organs. What mattered was to see to it that the priorities established in those documents were reflected in information activities. Regarding the activities of the information centres, particularly in the developing countries, greater significance must be attached to co-operation with non-governmental organizations, to the improvement of educational programmes dealing with the United Nations, and to the External Relations Division.

45. As for the expansion or modernization of media technology in the United Nations, that would not of itself automatically guarantee information activities of a higher quality.

46. The problem of equitable geographical distribution of the staff of the Department of Public Information remained unresolved, since the non-aligned as well as the socialist States continued to be underrepresented. Urgent measures were required to redress that imbalance. The priorities with regard to the activities of the Committee on Information were the following: to establish guidelines for the United Nations information policy, to evaluate the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and to promote the establishment of a new world information order.

47. Mrs. Nowotny (Austria) took the Chair.

48. Mr. GILMAN (United States of America) said that the questions the Committee was addressing regarding the free flow of information

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(Mr. Gilman, United States
of America)

were fundamental to any free society and were inextricably linked to the major goals of the United Nations, as set forth in the Charter. His delegation reaffirmed those great goals in the strongest possible terms, and reaffirmed as well the interrelationship between those goals and the institutions that were both the creatures and the guarantors of the free flow of information: a free press, independent journalism and "competitive pluralism" in the exchange of ideas and information.

49. By the same token, his delegation was gravely concerned over certain threats to that freedom, that independence and that pluralism. In that connexion, he read from a letter of President Reagan of the United States in which, recognizing the concerns of developing countries regarding imbalances in the current international flow of information and ideas, he had expressed his belief none the less that the way to resolve those concerns did not lie in silencing voices or restricting access to the means of communication, but in encouraging a diversity of opinion.

50. In July 1981, the United States House of Representatives had adopted an amendment to the bill authorizing contributions to the United Nations that would restrict United States payments to UNESCO should that body adopt at the next session of its General Conference any resolution that would restrict journalists or inhibit the free flow of information. Neither the United States Congress nor the President of the United States was reflecting an attitude hostile to UNESCO or the United Nations. Quite to the contrary, they were affirming the principles that animated the world organization, that were the foundations of its Charter and that represented the aspirations of peace and freedom-loving people everywhere in the world.

51. Again quoting from the letter of President Reagan to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, he underscored his position that the United States had long regarded the principle of the free flow of information as a cornerstone of any democratic political order and an essential instrument for furthering understanding among the peoples of the world. Those same affirmations had formed the core of the Declaration of Principles adopted in May 1981 in Talloires, France, by 63 independent media representatives from 21 nations. In that Declaration, among other things, they had supported the universal human right to be fully informed, which right required the free circulation of news and opinion. In other words, from its perspective and its own experience as a free people, the United States regarded a free press and the free flow of information as indispensable prerequisites for all other freedoms, and as essential foundations of a free society.

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(Mr. Gilman, United States
of America)

52. As President Reagan had observed in his letter, and as had those media representatives who had met at Talloires, the concerns of developing countries had to be recognized, especially regarding certain imbalances in the field of information. The United States stood ready to work with all who wished to share its technical skills and experience in the matter.

53. The basic task of the Department of Public Information was complex and difficult: nothing less than to report on the work of the United Nations to the world, and to do so with an even and impartial hand. On that score, the World Newspaper Supplement, a publication of the Department of Public Information, showed a degree of partisanship on the critical issues of the new international economic order which was entirely inappropriate for a United Nations publication. His delegation and Government believed that the essential distinction between information and advertising must be maintained.

54. He wished to make several comments on specific aspects of the report of the Committee on Information. The United States felt that a reorganization of the Department of Public Information would be appropriate in the interests of more efficient operation and products of a higher quality, and it could be done by reallocating resources within the Department's budget. In that same sense, a report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/36/218) noted that the percentage in staff and travel costs of the total expenditure by the Department had increased to 65 per cent in 1979 and might be over 70 per cent for 1980. With regard to recommendation No. 3 of the Committee on Information, to the effect that the Department should make its activities conform to resolutions adopted at the twenty-first session of the UNESCO General Conference, it should be noted, of course, that those resolutions were not binding on the Department. Recommendation No. 4 proposed that the Department should emphasize the new international economic order and the new world information order. Such "new orders", however, were variously interpreted and remained highly controversial, and the Department should avoid partisanship in those as in all other aspects of its work.

55. He concluded with the unequivocal affirmation by his delegation and his Government of the primacy of freedom of information in societies that were free and that were determined to remain free. There was no better way - indeed there was no other way - to guarantee that the people would be fully informed and thus govern themselves and determine their destinies.

56. Mr. BUENO (Brazil) recalled that, during the latest session of the Committee on Information, his delegation had recommended that

(Mr. Bueno, Brazil)

it should take as a point of departure for its debates the need to determine a set of priorities for the activities of the Department of Public Information. As was clear from its report (A/36/21), the Committee on Information had for the first time been able to reach consensus on a set of recommendations, which showed not only that a spirit of conciliation had prevailed, but that the activities of the United Nations in the field of information, and in particular those related to the establishment of a new world information and communications order, now received much broader support than in the past. Among others, there was the recommendation to renew the mandate of the Committee's on Information, as established in General Assembly resolution 34/182. There were also recommendations reiterating the importance of a close working relationship between UNESCO and United Nations Headquarters. Various recommendations referred to the specific activities and organizational structure of the Department of Public Information. His delegation fully supported the provisions aimed at redressing the geographical imbalance in the staff of the Department and particularly of the Radio and Visual Services Division. The redistribution of posts, was not the only factor involved in regionalizing that Division. The Committee on Information should adopt a detailed plan on the basis of information to be provided by the Secretariat. A decision had to be taken on how best to reconcile the functions assigned to regional units with central planning and co-ordination. It was also necessary to determine the specific steps to be followed within the framework of General Assembly resolution 35/201.

57. His delegation fully supported the recommendation that the Department should submit information on each of its activities, and recognized the difficulty of determining the methodologies needed to evaluate the prevailing image of the United Nations and of the effectiveness of the communication channels of the Department. The information centres could make a useful contribution by gathering data on the type of material which had been most requested by the public from the centres and by distributing a questionnaire to ascertain how the general public felt about the United Nations.

58. There was no doubt as to the link between the new information and communication order and the new international economic order. Nor could there be any doubt that the principle of freedom of information should be upheld under all circumstances. His delegation welcomed the report of the Director-General of UNESCO on the establishment of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, from which it expected to receive concrete suggestions in the future. It was hoped that the Council would inform the Committee on Information and the General Assembly about the decisions and recommendations which it adopted. The deliberations of the Council also affected the

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work of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), which was an essential instrument for interagency co-ordination and co-operation in the field of public information. During the brief period since it had come into existence, JUNIC had given clear proof of its effectiveness by submitting, at the latest session of the Committee on Information, a report dealing, inter alia, with the strengthening of the information capacity of the developing countries. He stressed that it was important that the work on that topic should continue.

59. The Brazilian delegation expressed satisfaction at the structure and contents of the Secretary-General's report (A/36/504), prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 35/201. With regard to the imbalance in the geographical distribution of the staff of the Department, the table in paragraph 7 showed that the concerns expressed by the developing countries were fully justified. Furthermore, some progress had been made, in keeping with the positive approach adopted by the Department, as paragraph 9 showed; however, efforts would have to be further increased, because the figures showed that Africa, Asia and Latin America, and above all, the Group of 77, were under-represented.

60. His delegation welcomed the increased co-operation with representatives of the news media and efforts to increase the number and improve the quality of radio broadcasts. Only a pragmatic approach would improve the results of the work of the Department and give real and effective impetus to the establishment of the new world information and communication order. His country reiterated its commitment to the principle of freedom of information and joined the delegations which had called for a spirit of co-operation in considering the question of information and communication.

61. Mr. KORSBAEK (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), said that none of the objectives of the United Nations could be achieved or even approached unless they were understood and supported by the peoples of the world. Such understanding was based on knowledge and communication, which were accordingly an essential part of United Nations activities. Freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas was universally recognized as a fundamental human right. That was the basis for the interest of the Nordic countries in the public information activities of the United Nations system, particularly the work of the Committee on Information. Two of the Nordic countries, Denmark and Finland, were currently members of that Committee and actively contributed to its work.

62. In the view of the Nordic countries, the public information activities of the United Nations should faithfully reflect the

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main goals and functions of the United Nations. It was a matter of setting priorities; in general the Nordic countries agreed with the definition of those priorities as set out in recommendation No. 4 in the Committee's report. Nevertheless, they would wish to see a more prominent place given to economic, social and cultural development.

63. The report of the Committee on Information recommended various measures for the future development of the United Nations Information activities, which ideally should reach people in all regions of the world. For that reason, United Nations information centres should be made more efficient. It was most appropriate that the Committee on Information should propose a study of ways and means to enhance the role of the centres. The proposed study should aim at measures giving the centres more functional independence and flexibility and enabling them to adapt their work to the specific needs and wishes of the countries concerned.

64. The Nordic countries noted with satisfaction that, in recommendation No. 11, the Department was invited to give in future reports a more thorough description and evaluation of its manifold activities. Such an evaluation would be of great assistance to the Committee on Information and the General Assembly in establishing priorities. The more that was known about the different elements of the programme, the easier it would be to make qualified judgements. In that context, the Nordic countries wished to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and his staff for their constant efforts to meet the demands made upon them.

65. Communication, by definition, meant exchange and participation. That should also apply to public information activities. Ways and means should be developed to promote a two-way exchange of information by strengthening relations with the mass media, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations and listening attentively to their experience and suggestions as to how the public at large could be made more aware of and better understand the aims and achievements of the United Nations.

66. An extremely important task of the Department was that of stimulating the work of JUNIC and ensuring a rational division of labour among the information services of the entire United Nations system. It was sincerely hoped that JUNIC would be able to ensure the continued publication of Development Forum, which was the only interagency publication of the United Nations system and was widely appreciated for its coverage of social and economic affairs and other related issues. The financial basis of Development Forum should be secured through the United Nations regular budget, and the United Nations organs which already helped finance its publication

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should be encouraged to avoid duplication of effort by confirming their financial support on a long-term basis; likewise, those which did not contribute should be invited to do so.

67. On various occasions and in various forums the Nordic countries had emphasized the central role of UNESCO in the field of communication and information and wished to thank the Assistant Director-General for his report. UNESCO was developing the idea of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information. That should be carried out by developing mass-media structures to offer the public the fullest information possible at both the national and international level.

68. The Nordic countries recognized the need for a new world information order aimed at redressing the existing imbalances in communication while at the same time safeguarding freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and the freedom to gather, receive and impart information, which were universally recognized as fundamental freedoms. For millions of people those freedoms remained but empty words because they lacked access to communication and the opportunity to participate in it and because they did not have the information infrastructures to enjoy those freedoms. The decision taken by UNESCO to establish the International Programme for the Development of Communication was a most significant practical measure for the promotion of such a new world information and communication order.

69. It was an encouraging sign that at the first session of the Intergovernmental Council of the Programme held in Paris in June 1981, all the decisions had been taken by consensus. The Programme had been entrusted with the important task of helping developing countries to establish communications structures and skills necessary to satisfy the basic communications needs of their own populations and to contribute to the international exchange of words and images. It was a task of a practical nature: the provision of communications tools. The Programme had not been mandated to initiate any kind of normative action regarding the content of communication. The first session of the Intergovernmental Council had decided to give priority in the early stages of the Programme to regional and subregional projects. In the case of national projects, priority should be given to those countries whose communications systems were least developed. At the second session of the Intergovernmental Council, to be held in Mexico in January 1982, the Council expected to be in a position to consider a limited number of well-studied projects concerning communications planning, training and exchange in all regions of the third world.

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70. During the first session of the Council some contributions to the financing of the Programme had been pledged. There could be no doubt that well-defined proposals for projects would attract more donors. Many countries, among them the Nordic countries, had stated that they would be prepared to give positive consideration to supporting feasible communication projects and thereby further increase their involvement in that vital part of the development process.

71. Mr. GONZALEZ-MANET (Cuba) expressed his country's satisfaction with the set of recommendations drawn up by the Committee on Information for submission to the General Assembly. On the whole, the conclusions contained in that text reflected the needs and hopes of about a hundred nations for greater efficiency in the activities of the Department of Public Information and better co-ordination with the objectives of UNESCO in the area of information and communications.

72. There were some aspects of the subject which were disquieting, such as the question of deciding whether or not the Committee should hold a general debate, which in effect involved a fundamental requirement for the Committee's work. The Cuban delegation considered it particularly significant that top priority had been accorded in the first recommendation (paragraph 154 of document A/36/21) to the "need... for all to collaborate in the establishment of a new world information and communication order based, inter alia, ... on wider and better balanced dissemination of information, ... and ... the urgent need to change the dependent status of the developing countries ... and intended also to strengthen peace and international understanding".

73. The new information body would not only identify efforts made in that respect by the movement of non-aligned countries since the fourth Summit Conference of Heads of State and Government held at Algiers in 1973, but would also be an essential element in the defence of the cultural identity and national sovereignty of three quarters of mankind, who were daily subjected to the lies imposed on them by the transnational information monopolies. The recommendations approved by the Committee on Information gave the United Nations system a prominent role in the implementation of an objective and balanced two-way flow of information. That constructive trend was reflected in the Secretary-General's report which the Cuban delegation appreciated.

74. Defending the new international information order meant staunchly defending UNESCO and the International Programme for Development of Communications (IPDC), which had been attacked and

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subjected to blackmail and sabotage by the United States and some allied Governments.

75. The IPDC was the first concrete step towards the establishment of the new information order taken in the United Nations, which meant that the United Nations and UNESCO were playing an active role in combating the monopoly of the big transnational corporations and promoting the decolonization of information.

76. With regard to the recommendations approved by the Committee, he stressed the importance of the following activities: supporting renewal of the mandate of the Committee on Information; strengthening the activities of the Department of Public Information as the focal point for co-ordinating United Nations activities in that field; actively promoting the new information order and avoiding any overlapping of functions with UNESCO; supporting efforts to redress the imbalance in the composition of the staff of the Department of Public Information and particularly in the Radio and Visual Services Division, especially as far as Africa and the Arab States - the two most underrepresented regions - were concerned. It was equally important to support the proposal by the Spanish delegation regarding the establishment of a small unit to prepare material in Spanish for distribution at the regional information centres; to adopt a plan for the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division of the Department of Public Information; to investigate the extent to which world public opinion was aware of the true image of the United Nations; to support co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the movement of non-aligned countries in the field of information; to support the appeal to Member States and to all information and communications media for wider dissemination of information on United Nations activities; to continue and strengthen the work of the Joint United Nations Information Committee as the instrument for interagency co-ordination and co-operation in the field of public information; to expand the information centres and give them greater functional flexibility and consider the possibility of the United Nations acquiring its own communications satellite as a first step towards the decolonization of information; to give firm support to the maximum strengthening of Development Forum and consider the feasibility of locating the editorial offices and the printing facilities for that publication in a developing country; to note his delegation's approval of the publicity given to the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the non-aligned movement and the commemoration of World Food Day, and request that the Secretary-General should fully apply the recommendations in section III of General Assembly resolution 35/201; to stress the importance of recommendation 11 which envisaged the possibility of holding general debate in the Committee on Information in order to give all members the opportunity to express their opinions on the subject of information.

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77. In the opinion of his delegation, information problems were not limited to the developing world, since the radical changes brought about by applied microcomputer science concerned the entire international community. Attempts to modernize the developed capitalist system caused structural unemployment, the abolition of posts and rendered skills obsolete; those changes needed to be analyzed within a comprehensive socio-political context.

78. The countries which had mastered that technology, particularly the United States, used telecommunications as an instrument of military might, to plunder the natural resources of underdeveloped countries and to manipulate the prices of raw materials on the stock markets as a result of remote sensing. Moreover, in flagrant violation of the principles of the United Nations, of UNESCO and international organizations, powerful interests involving large private enterprises were defying the international community by officially announcing that the United States Government, together with international news agencies, would fight hard against the new world information and communication order. It was therefore to be expected that a Government whose policy was based on warmongering and an arms build-up should resort to measures such as the imminent installation of a radio transmitter for the ideological penetration and destabilization of Cuba.

79. Since Cubans shared identical goals and the same social commitment, there was a powerful social and political cohesion which enabled Cuba to protect itself against the United States information system, which was designed for ideological penetration and economic control. It was therefore absolutely necessary to apply national communication and information policies which would serve as the basis for the new international information order. Similarly, it was necessary to support the recommendations of the Committee on Information aimed at strengthening the aspirations of the developing countries for economic progress, peace, cultural identity and national sovereignty.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.