

**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

THIRTY-SIXTH SESSION

*Official Records **



COPY:
DO NOT REMOVE
FROM ROOM
L 201 (WWBR)

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
12th meeting
held on
Friday, 23 October 1981
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 67: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued):

- (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

**AGENDA ITEM 64: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES
AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (continued)**

* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550, 866 United Nations Plaza (Alcoa Building), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/36/SR.12
4 November 1981
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

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

AGENDA ITEM 67: QUESTION RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued):

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (A/36/21)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/36/504)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (A/36/530)

1. Mr. NOWAK (Poland) said that his delegation attached great importance to the activities of the United Nations in the field of information. Information played a significant role in relations among States in promoting peace and mutual understanding. The importance of that function was reflected in the endeavour to examine and reshape the existing international information and communication order. Poland supported all efforts to remove existing imbalances and to eliminate the obstacles in the field of information which stood in the way of the political, cultural, economic and spiritual emancipation of all nations.
2. A new world information and communication order should take into account the needs and interests of all participants in international life. Increased attention should be given to imbalances in the flow of information between developed and developing countries. He shared the growing criticism directed by the developing countries against the activities of some major western news agencies which were objectively aimed at imposing their political beliefs and patterns of thinking on developing countries.
3. Exchanges of information constituted a part of international relations, and his delegation considered that they should be governed by principles of international law and by the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Precedents already existed in that field - namely the decisions embodied in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, signed at Helsinki in 1975.
4. On the question of the information activities of the United Nations, his delegation appreciated the role played by UNESCO in promoting the establishment of a new, more just and more effective information and communication order, as described in document A/36/530. He hoped that co-operation between UNESCO and the United Nations Committee on Information would be extended, and that duplication of activities would be avoided.
5. As a member of the Committee on Information, his delegation wished to stress the importance which it attached to the Committee's work, which was useful and constructive; and it supported the recommendations of the Committee. It saw a wide field of activity for the Committee on Information, and was therefore fully in favour of renewing its mandate as set forth in General Assembly resolution 34/182 and reaffirmed in resolution 35/201.
6. With regard to the work performed by the Department of Public Information, he commended the constant co-operation between DPI and the Committee on Information, but nevertheless considered that the Department should better reflect the priorities of the United Nations such as international peace and security, disarmament, the promotion of human rights and the struggle against racial discrimination.

/...

(Mr. Nowak, Poland)

7. His delegation was also concerned at the imbalance in the geographical distribution of posts in the Department of Public Information; in that connexion, he supported recommendation 6 of the Committee on Information and hoped that it would be fully implemented. In conclusion, his delegation would be glad to see the Organization play a larger role in the dissemination of public information and in reshaping the existing information order.

8. Mr. PERCIVAL (Australia) said that, in identifying the problems which existed in the field of information, previous speakers - and, in particular, those from the developing countries - had stressed the high priority which they accorded to ensuring as full and free a flow of objective information as possible, and to improving communications facilities in many countries. Like most other countries, Australia believed that the greater the degree of understanding which could be generated between countries of differing political, economic, social and cultural systems, the greater would be the prospects of creating a truly prosperous, peaceful and stable world.

9. His delegation understood the concern felt by many developing countries at the shortcomings in existing global information and communications arrangements. It also agreed with those who had emphasized the close interdependence between a new international economic order and a new world information and communication order. He thought that, in seeking the realization of that objective, it was important - as the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had said - that change should come about not in an abrupt manner but on an evolving, incremental basis which should be positive, co-operative and forward-looking.

10. The overall tenor of the debate had been one of guarded optimism and hope. Australia would continue its efforts to bring about a more equitable information and communications situation through the training arrangements for journalists which it had developed over many years, and by persisting in its efforts to help strengthen the information and communications infrastructure of the developing countries. Australia had participated actively in the Commonwealth Committee on Communications and the Media, which had been set up to examine the interaction between communications, society and development. That Committee had, in its conclusions, stressed the need for individual countries to improve their own internal communications systems and had drawn attention to the key importance of properly trained personnel. A Commonwealth Media Exchange Fund had also been established. In addition, the possibility was also being examined of establishing a South Pacific news exchange scheme to enable the countries of that region to obtain better access to news and information.

11. He was glad to note that innovations had been introduced into the programme of the Department of Public Information, and were being carried out within existing budgetary resources. His delegation generally endorsed the recommendations contained in paragraph 154 of the report of the Committee on Information.

12. In conclusion, his delegation wished to associate itself with those who had stressed the importance of continued adherence to article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights regarding the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

/...

13. Mrs. MUSAU (Zaire) said that in her country information was free, objective and derived from many and varied sources. Zaire considered that the free flow of information and its wide and balanced dissemination contributed to the strengthening of international peace, understanding and co-operation. Its position on the question of information could be summed up in the concept that "better communications makes for greater mutual understanding with the aim of achieving peaceful co-existence". In that connexion, her delegation deplored the dependent status of the developing countries in the field of information and communication, and considered that the time had come to broaden and diversify the information flow from the South to the North, in order to help strengthen international peace and understanding.

14. In her view the United Nations information services should be a model for the whole world to follow, a model based on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on the growing need to establish a new world information and communication order.

15. Posts in the Department of Public Information should be equitably distributed among the various regional groups. In that connexion, her delegation emphasized the need for increasing the representation of developing countries in posts in the professional category and above. The Department should also strengthen its co-operation with the non-aligned countries and try to achieve a better linguistic balance; and it should take full advantage of the efforts of national and regional news agencies. Zaire supported the idea of a United Nations communication satellite.

16. Lastly, her delegation supported the proposals made by other delegations, and by the Committee on Information, to the effect that the Department of Public Information should be provided with the necessary resources for the continued publication and improvement of Development Forum, the interagency publication of the United Nations system.

17. Mr. JAMAL (Qatar) said that one of the functions of information in the present-day world was to close the gaps separating the nations of the world, by building bridges of communication based on a profound understanding of the various societies. Despite mankind's desire to use the information media for worthy causes, there were some who used the media to maintain the status quo and to reject any change that would alter the present economic, social or political balance of power.

18. In resolution 3535 (XXX), the General Assembly had reaffirmed the criteria for the efficiency of information media - efficiency which was demonstrated in the activities of the United Nations and its various agencies. In that connexion, he referred to General Assembly resolution 34/182 establishing the Committee on Information, which had been given the task of promoting the new world information order intended to strengthen international understanding.

19. He commended the constructive measures taken by the Committee on Information and also the contribution made by UNESCO, particularly in establishing the International Programme for the Development of Communication, whose objective was to bridge the differences between the developed and developing countries and between the developing countries themselves.

/...

(Mr. Jamal, Qatar)

20. The present structures of information systems reflected the great disparities between the economic structures of developed and developing countries. The developed countries' monopoly of technology and of the information media enabled those countries to adapt the content of the news to serve their own interests. The presented stereotyped pictures of the developing countries and disregarded the objective and material facts and the positive aspects and the progress made by those countries. The present structure of information exchanges was designed to maintain existing international economic relations, in which countries were divided into the "haves" and the "have nots" - a situation inherited from long periods of colonization.

21. His delegation commended UNESCO's efforts to bring about the establishment of a new world information and communication order; it noted that those efforts were being made in spite of an intensive campaign of disparagement launched by the information media in order to distort and misrepresent that organization's noble task. The media had so far achieved some measure of success; but total agreement on the immediate implementation of the new order had still not been reached. The international community must not allow that campaign to go on obstructing UNESCO's task, which was supported by the vast majority of States Members of the United Nations.

22. His country urged third world countries to assume their responsibilities for the strengthening of their own information networks. United Nations assistance was essential in all aspects of that task - including the training of high-level personnel - in order to counter effectively, by every possible means, the efforts being made by the western information monopolies.

23. Gulf Arab countries, including Qatar, had established a Co-operation Council for co-ordinating, planning and implementing the information policies of the region, and for promoting friendly relations with one another and with the countries of the rest of the world. That example of regional co-operation should encourage other countries to combine their efforts and strengthen their own systems. Qatar hoped that the Committee would endorse the constructive recommendations of the Committee on Information, which would mark an important step forward towards the establishment of the new world information and communication order.

24. Mr. ABDULAH (Trinidad and Tobago) said that the debate on questions relating to information was taking place against a background of intense world-wide discussion on the philosophy of information. The basic concepts of that philosophy were enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and provided for the enjoyment of the right to individual freedom of opinion and expression. Trinidad and Tobago upheld that right, which included the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media.

25. The logical outcome of an acceptance of those rights was a free and balanced flow of information. There was an imbalance in the flow of information between developed and developing countries, with the advantage entirely on the side of the developed countries; hence the call for a new world information and communication order. What was clearly needed was a free circulation - in both directions - of objective, responsible, wider and better-balanced information, accessible to all and obtained from a diversity of sources, in circumstances that would make developing countries partners in the communication process, and not dependents, as at present. For that

/...

(Mr. Abdulah, Trinidad and Tobago)

purpose, developing countries should be increasingly helped to strengthen their own communication systems through the acquisition and use of modern technology and the training of information personnel. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which envisaged the transfer of knowledge and technology to the developing countries. The greater the equality between the communication systems of developed and developing countries, the less compelling would be the arguments for restricting the free flow of information between them.

26. There was, unfortunately, a view that information was a piece of merchandise to be traded in the free marketplace. Those who held that view deliberately ignored the fact that the meaning of the words "to inform" was "to educate", or to give intellectual and moral training. His delegation regarded the provision of information as a vital social need, and believed that the establishment of a new world information and communication order was essentially linked with the efforts to achieve the new international economic order. The General Assembly had clearly recognized that link in resolutions 34/182 and 35/201, and had taken it into account in approving the mandate of the Committee on Information.

27. His delegation fully supported the Committee's report and all its recommendations. One positive result of the Committee's work was that the Department of Public Information had become more aware of the fact that information was a serious task of public education in such vital areas as disarmament, international security, peace-keeping, decolonization, development, human rights, the struggle against racial discrimination and many other issues. It was therefore important for DPI to take steps to determine the methodologies needed to evaluate the image of the United Nations and knowledge of its principles, objectives, priority areas and work, and the effectiveness of the various communication channels of the Department in the dissemination of information for the various sectors of public opinion throughout the world.

28. Two areas of concern to his delegation were the question of the equitable geographical distribution of staff of the Department and the need to improve the linguistic balance in the production of some of the Department's publications and programmes. While there had been some improvement in those two areas since the matter had been raised the previous year, his delegation looked forward to hearing of greater progress in the year ahead. Another area to which his delegation attached great importance was the future expansion of the regional units. In that regard, Trinidad and Tobago urged approval by the General Assembly of the proposals in the Committee's report regarding the expansion of the African unit and the creation of a Caribbean unit in the Radio Services.

29. His delegation had been pleased to note the increasing co-operation between the Department and the non-aligned countries in the field of information, not only through the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and the Inter-Press Service, but also through other regional news agencies. That, together with the recently initiated training programme for journalists and broadcasters from developing countries, should go a long way towards making the work of the Department more representative of the views of all the Members of the Organization.

/...

(Mr. Abdulah, Trinidad and Tobago)

30. With respect to the production of programmes aimed at specific audiences, one of the vital target areas was youth. Fostering understanding and co-operation among nations should be a basic principle in programmes for young people and one of the major themes of the medium-term plan 1984-1989 on public information, coinciding with and reinforcing the decision to celebrate 1985 as International Youth Year.

31. The presentation of topical material with references to its background and origin, in a simplified and lively form that would attract the attention of the international youth community, would not only promote the aims and objectives of the Organization itself in a more meaningful way but would also assist in the achievement of one of the objectives of the medium-term plan. In any event, the opinions of young people could not be excluded or ignored if the process of development was to be orderly and sustained.

32. Any serious effort to promote world peace and progress must have as essential elements the free circulation of information and free access to information. However, as with all freedoms, that presupposed willingness and the capacity to act responsibly. It also imposed the moral obligation to spread knowledge without malicious intent. At the present juncture, all Member States had a crucial responsibility, both as individual Member States and as members of the pertinent organs of the United Nations system, to ensure that those elements were combined to establish a more just and more effective world information and communication order. Trinidad and Tobago pledged its efforts to that end.

33. Mr. BOLD (Mongolian People's Republic) said that since the dawn of civilization, information and communication had played a major role in and formed an essential part of social life. With the advent of space technology, information and communication had acquired even greater scope and influence. There were at present 30,000 radio and television stations in the world, over a billion radio receiving sets; over 400 million television sets; there were more than 8,200 daily newspapers with a circulation of over 440 million; and 1,700 books were published a day.

34. Yet despite those impressive statistics, the general situation in the field of information was extremely unsatisfactory. There were unfair imbalances in the production and distribution of information: 11 developing countries had no newspapers at all, 19 had only one, and 35 had no news agencies.

35. All the information reaching the developing countries was supplied by a handful of powerful western agencies. In those circumstances, many of the developing countries had come to the conclusion that their efforts to achieve genuine social, economic and cultural progress would be futile until they had achieved cultural freedom by abolishing the control of information by capitalist monopolies. The hopes of the developing countries for the establishment of a new world information and communication order, on the basis of justice and equality, was whole-heartedly supported by Mongolia and all the socialist countries.

36. It was no accident that the Political Declaration of the Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, 1976, embodied the idea that the new world information and communication order was just as important as the new international economic order in the African, Asian and Latin American peoples' struggle for independence.

/...

(Mr. Bold, Mongolia)

37. The restructuring of the information order was particularly urgent in view of the increasing tensions in international relations. The western media were conducting wild campaigns and insidious attacks against the socialist countries in an attempt to persuade the public of the existence of a so-called Soviet military threat. The psychological campaign was being pursued by many of the media, including radio stations such as the Voice of America, Radio Liberty, and Radio Free Europe. The two latter stations had recently joined forces to broadcast programmes in over 20 Eastern European languages, at a cost of more than \$100 million. No effort was spared in a veritable psychological war to blacken the image of socialism by bombardments of strategic propaganda.

38. Mongolia and all the socialist countries actively supported the peoples' struggle to abolish the information gap and achieve a new information and communication order, and the activities of the United Nations and other international organizations, including UNESCO. A number of important measures had already been adopted, among them the Declaration on Fundamental Principles Concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War; and the twenty-first UNESCO General Conference had adopted the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which, with its Intergovernmental Council, would promote co-operation and strengthen assistance to the developing countries with a view to eliminating the information gap between developing and developed countries.

39. The Western Powers were obstinately opposing UNESCO's efforts; they did not want to see any changes in the existing structure of the media because they wanted to maintain their monopoly, which enabled them to control and shape world public opinion and to disseminate propaganda in their own interests. Their relentless attacks on UNESCO had reached a point where the United States had recently threatened to suspend its financial contributions.

40. Mongolia greatly valued UNESCO's activities and shared in its efforts to establish a new world information and communication order, in the interests of strengthening peace, reducing tension and furthering the peoples' economic and social progress. It was confident that the international community would not permit the machinations of the forces of reaction to block the sound efforts being made to restructure the information order. The current critical international situation called for urgent measures to improve information and to fulfil the responsibilities of the United Nations. As everyone knew, there was room for improvement in the Organization's information activities, particularly those of the Department of Public Information. The Department should extend its activities and direct them to the broad objectives of the United Nations, such as disarmament, decolonization, combating apartheid and racial discrimination, the promotion of human rights and the establishment of a new international economic order and a new world information and communication order. Mongolia supported the proposal by Democratic Yemen for setting in motion a plan for the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division, in accordance with the recommendations of the Committee on Information.

/...

(Mr. Bold, Mongolia)

41. Another problem that had to be solved was the imbalance in the geographical representation of the staff in the Department of Public Information. All regional groups and all countries should be represented. Mongolia supported the recommendations formulated by the Committee on Information, and endorsed the renewal of its mandate.

42. Based on its position of principle, Mongolia supported the idea of restructuring the world information and communication order on a just and democratic basis, and had supported that idea from the very start. Liberation from colonialism in all its aspects was a difficult but not impossible task and it could be achieved with the co-operation of the developing countries.

43. Recognition of the right of States to present their ideas through the media did not imply acceptance of propaganda of hatred and incitement to war and to interference in the internal affairs of States. In that respect, objectivity must be the most important factor. In Mongolia, the media served the interests of the people through the promotion of the principles of socialism, the strengthening of international peace and security and the provision of information on the situation of the developing countries and their efforts to eliminate colonialism and achieve true social and economic independence. In that context, Mongolia was prepared to collaborate with the international community in improving the international atmosphere in the field of information and communication and in promoting world peace and security, the development of co-operation among peoples and the establishment of favourable conditions for economic and social progress.

44. Mr. SASORIT (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the United Nations information policy was perfectly clear: to promote the strengthening of peace, disarmament, international understanding, human rights and the struggle against racism, apartheid and incitement to war. The United Nations Charter was the primary source of that effort, and General Assembly resolutions 33/115 and 34/182, as well as the resolutions adopted at the twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO, held in Belgrade, and at the Sixth Summit Conference of Non-Aligned Countries, were its most important landmarks.

45. The report of the Committee on Information (A/36/21), the report of the Secretary-General (A/36/504) and the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/36/530) were steps towards the new world information and communication order, the goal of which should be the elimination of the oligopoly of big capitalist news agencies and the achievement of decolonization and democratization in the information field. The big Western news agencies, with their material, technical and institutional superiority, dominated information activities. Except for TASS and some other agencies of the socialist countries, the agencies of other countries were so dependent on those capitalist giants that there was an urgent need to develop their infrastructures in that field. Only then could they oppose the big agencies which, behind slogans like "manifest destiny" or "defence of vital interests", had manipulated and distorted news on the pretext of defending freedom of information.

/...

(Mr. Sasorit, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

46. The new world information order and the new international economic order must be established at the same time, since the capitalist countries used their technical superiority in information to maintain their domination. The establishment of the International Programme for Development of Communications was undoubtedly an important first step towards establishing a new world information order.

47. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General (A/36/504), he noted that despite some improvement in the geographical distribution of the staff of the Department of Public Information, the area of Asia and the Pacific was still under-represented. He emphasized the efforts that were being made to achieve regional co-operation in the information field and the establishment of common services in Asia, Africa and Latin America. He expressed the hope that the Development Forum would publish more information about the third world, especially about the least developed countries. Finally, concerning the training of journalists and communication and information technicians, he said the trainees must come from developing countries, since they would become active in pursuing the objectives of the new world information order.

48. Miss KOUYOKILA (Congo) said that her country's participation in the work of the Committee on Information demonstrated the importance it attached to the establishment of a new world information order and the operations of the United Nations Department of Public Information. More than ever, the world was witnessing a breakdown of détente in international relations and an intensification of the cold war. In that context, the first obstacle which must be eliminated was the enormous concentration of the media in the hands of a minority which had the money to misuse its monopoly in the information field. And that interfered with the application of such an essential principle as that of freedom of information. Her country had no intention of challenging the sacred principle of freedom of the press and of opinion, which was one of the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and laid down in the Constitution of the People's Republic of the Congo. Freedom of the press was a tangible reality in the People's Republic of the Congo, whose policy continued to be dictated by the well-being of its citizens.

49. Her country unconditionally supported the work of UNESCO and the United Nations aimed at formulating and establishing a new world communication order. Some countries which advocated freedom of information also advocated lack of understanding, racism and non-communication and retained their negative and archaic view of the world even while a new one was taking shape. Reluctance to try to change the current economic order and the a priori proclamation of absolute laissez faire in the communication field strictly for the benefit of the multinational corporations was not the right way to achieve the ideals of the United Nations Charter. When the United Nations took up a position in favour of decolonization and self-determination or concerned itself with the victims of racism and apartheid, it was not engaging in propaganda. It had the right and the duty to promote the just causes and fundamental ideals of mankind, which obviously did not always coincide with the egotistical interests of the rich and powerful. Consequently, those who were interested in making profits, and their pressure groups, would have to change with the times so that all peoples could benefit equitably from the indispensable interaction of the world's forces and its potential.

/...

(Miss Kouyokila, Congo)

50. In that connexion, she said that the work of the Department of Public Information must be supported and the professional position of some of the nationals of African countries improved; the General Assembly must therefore consider the problem of the equitable geographical distribution of the Department's staff. Furthermore, the United Nations must acquire its own telecommunications satellite fairly soon, since it must present itself in the modern world as the only force capable of inspiring the ideals which had led all Member States to adhere to the Charter. As to budgetary problems, it was obvious that the zero-growth budget affected the Department of Public Information. Nevertheless, it was extremely important that the Secretariat give priority in budget allocations to the Department, and it must also make the structural improvements that were needed to ensure that the resources at the Department's disposal could be properly used.

51. Turning to the problem of the United Nations image, she said that she was dissatisfied with the role played by DPI in that matter and that she supported the project for broadcasts on certain wavelengths proposed by the General Assembly. Positive steps must be taken immediately to improve communication between large and small nations on the one hand, and between the United Nations system and the international community on the other. UNESCO's activities in that area were of particular interest, and the United Nations should strengthen its co-operation with that agency.

52. Mr. KA (Senegal) praised the work done by the Committee on Information with respect to the establishment of a new world information and communication order. He was also pleased that the United Nations Department of Public Information and the UNESCO secretariat had devoted attention to eliminating the existing disparity between the countries of the northern hemisphere, with their advanced technology and the developing countries.

53. Communications and information added a new dimension to contemporary society. The uneven distribution of information media reflected the current world distribution of economic power and stood in the way of development. Technological progress had heightened the differences between States and cultures in such a way that only those with the most advanced media controlled the flow of information and international relations. Karl Marx had said that the dominant ideas were those of the ruling classes and his delegation would add that today the dominant ideas were those of the nations which rules in the sphere of information and communications.

54. In order really to eliminate inequalities in information, it was necessary to redirect the flow of information, provide free access to information, decolonize information, respect the values of civilization and display a political will for co-operation and international understanding. Any new world information and communication order should similarly be viewed from the cultural angle; that order should be one of mutual respect among peoples and joint progress towards development. Only thus could societies be kept from disintegrating and the international situation from being permanently destabilized.

/...

(Mr. Ka, Senegal)

55. The resolutions adopted by the non-aligned countries, the member countries of OAU and the United Nations had made it manifestly clear that co-operation in the field of information and communications was an integral part of the effort to establish more democratic international relations. Within the framework of the International Programme for Development of Communications, UNESCO was monitoring the implementation of those resolutions. It was to be hoped that the Programme's Intergovernmental Council would identify and meet the urgent priorities of certain States. To that end, the General Assembly should endorse some of the provisions of resolution No. 1 contained in document A/36/530.

56. He congratulated the Committee on Information on the recommendations in its report (A/36/21) having to do with the information centres, an autonomous United Nations satellite system, the linguistic balance of the information services, the adequate representation of developing countries in posts at the policy-making level, and the training of journalists and broadcasters. He recommended, for his part, that the Secretariat should give preferential attention to implementing the recommendations and should provide the Department of Public Information with adequate means to carry out its functions more effectively. By putting the successive recommendations of the Committee on Information into effect, the world community would gradually be defining the principles of the new world information and communication order and would come closer to genuine understanding among peoples and nations.

57. Mr. MOKANASIVAM (Singapore) said that the concept of a new information and communication order, being still somewhat nebulous, needed to be given greater specificity. As suggested by Mr. Akashi, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, the concept comprised three principal elements. With regard to the first - free circulation of and access to information - the Committee on Information had made no recommendation which could in any way affect the principle of freedom of opinion and expression or freedom to disseminate information. With regard to the second element - a better and more balanced dissemination of information - the demand by the developing countries for a two-way flow of information between the developed world and the third world was not an unreasonable one. To achieve the third element - a change in the dependent status of the developing countries in the field of information and communications - the developing countries should take it upon themselves to develop their communications infrastructures and train media personnel. Equally important was the attitude of third-world Governments towards the mass media. Third-world Governments could not on the one hand abolish freedom of the press and on the other hand expect the information and communications media to flourish. The developed countries and the relevant international organizations could also help the developing countries to reduce their dependence in the field of information. The training activities undertaken by the Department of Public Information and UNESCO, in collaboration with UNDP and a number of European countries, were working in that direction.

58. With the exception of a minority of extremist developing countries, most of the developing countries shared the West's belief in the freedom of information. Yet all of them, including those which believed in the freedom of information, had certain legitimate grievances against the information and communications media of the West, which had to be heeded. Otherwise there was a danger that interests hostile to the West would exploit third-world grievances for their own political ends. It was,

/...

(Mr. Mokanasivam, Singapore)

finally, in the interests of the Western countries to help the developing countries which upheld the principle of freedom of the press to develop their communications infrastructures and train media personnel.

59. As for the Department of Public Information, it could be seen from document A/36/504 that of the seven regional groups the most over-represented was North America and the Caribbean. The group most under-represented in the Department, on the other hand, was Asia and the Pacific. Consequently, the need for a more equitable representation of Asia and the Pacific in the Department was obvious. Of all the divisions in the Department of Public Information, the one with the fewest staff members from developing countries was the Radio and Visual Services Division. The plan which had been adopted to regionalize that Division in the near future was a welcome one. In implementing the regionalization plan, the Department must ensure that personnel of the highest quality were recruited from the developing countries so that the true objective of regionalization, which was to produce programmes of quality with a regional flavour, would be achieved.

60. The first training programme for journalists and broadcasters organized by the Department of Public Information had involved a small number of participants but had been extremely worthwhile. The programme should be continued, as should the editors' roundtables and the regional mass media roundtables which had been held in various parts of the world.

61. Finally, the Joint United Nations Information Committee had, contrary to what was usually the case in the United Nations system, achieved real inter-agency co-operation in the field of communications. All members of that Committee were urged to continue their efforts to achieve better and more action-oriented co-operation.

AGENDA ITEM 64: REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE POPULATION OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (continued)

62. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that Bangladesh, the Comoros, Chad, the Gambia, Guinea, Indonesia, Iran, Mali, the Niger, Pakistan, Senegal and Turkey had become sponsors of the draft resolution in document A/SPC/36/L.3.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.