



# General Assembly

Seventy-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General  
23 January 2024

Original: English

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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 14th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 19 October 2023, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Rendtorff-Smith (Vice-Chair) ..... (Denmark)

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*In the absence of Ms. Joyini (South Africa), Ms. Rendtorff-Smith (Denmark), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 53: Questions relating to information**  
(continued) (A/78/21, A/78/294)

1. **Ms. Kuzee** (Namibia) said that the Department of Global Communications carried out sterling work to support factual reporting while increasing the visibility of United Nations activities at a time when scepticism about the Organization's value and relevance was rife. In that connection, the United Nations information centres should strengthen their advocacy for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The Department also worked to raise awareness about the lagging progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Organization's official websites, including the United Nations News website, and social media accounts were easily accessible and regularly updated with accurate and relevant information about the dire humanitarian situation in conflict zones around the world.

2. The proposals contained in policy brief 8 of the Secretary-General on information integrity on digital platforms would complement efforts to promote facts, expose conspiracies and lies, and safeguard freedom of expression and information. At a time when misinformation and disinformation campaigns had the ability to destabilize global politics and interfere with digital infrastructure, it was important to gain traction on the proposed code of conduct for information integrity on digital platforms and related framework in order to address the shortcomings of the information space. Such efforts should be coordinated with national and regional institutions to ensure consistency. Her delegation hoped that the issue would be considered carefully during the Summit of the Future in 2024.

3. **Ms. Bryant** (Australia) said that global information integrity continued to decline at a rapid pace. Her delegation was concerned about the threats posed by information manipulation, which were driven by advances in modern technology, including artificial intelligence and inauthentic amplification. In the Indo-Pacific region, authoritarian States employed malign narratives to create regional divisions, impede national sovereignty and disrupt social cohesion. Disinformation was undermining the values and international obligations that the United Nations had worked tirelessly to embed. The global information architecture was also threatened by foreign media ownership, corrupt practices, algorithm manipulation, exclusive

syndication, journalist intimidation and the geopolitical gaming of digital communications infrastructure. Such threats could lead to power imbalances and foreign coercion. Furthermore, the coordinated amplification of disinformation within multilateral forums, including at the United Nations, should not be overlooked.

4. To counter information threats, her Government focused on safeguarding an open and transparent environment with access to accurate and credible information. It took particular care to protect the country's culturally and linguistically diverse communities from unique threats by foreign powers that sought to silence, intimidate, monitor and co-opt diasporas to advance their economic and political interests. The Government also continued to review domestic legislation and regulatory frameworks to protect electoral integrity, data security and communications infrastructure.

5. **Ms. Tokarska** (Ukraine) said that most stakeholders viewed information as a critical asset to address global challenges, improve quality of life and overcome the development divide. However, some saw benefit in using information as a weapon. Protecting information integrity must therefore remain a priority for the Department of Global Communications. Information-related threats and challenges within the United Nations framework must be addressed in a comprehensive manner, with a particular focus on threats to international peace and security and emerging risks, such as those related to artificial intelligence.

6. Such threats were of primary concern for her country, since Russia had widely used information warfare in its ongoing invasion of Ukraine in order to justify its aggression, undermine international solidarity in defence of the Charter of the United Nations and avoid responsibility for its war crimes and crimes against humanity. The aggressor State had made regular attempts to misuse the United Nations framework to disseminate propaganda and divert the attention of Member States from its flagrant violations of the Charter and international human rights and humanitarian law. Such attempts had detrimental consequences for the credibility of the Security Council. Upon the initiative of Ukraine, General Assembly resolution 77/128 B included a provision reiterating the condemnation of all forms of propaganda designed or likely to provoke or encourage any threat to peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression, something that clearly remained highly relevant.

7. It was important to use precise wording that left no room for manipulation and speculation about the nature of or parties to the conflict. The use of terms such as

“armed conflict in Ukraine” in certain United Nations documents created a comfortable silence around the aggressor State. Far from being trivial, such nuances in language could frame the reaction of target audiences, who could begin to overlook the instigator and demand de-escalation and peace from the country being attacked. Such an approach ran counter to the language used in General Assembly resolutions adopted in response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the statements of the Secretary-General on the matter. Those documents should form the basis of the wording used in official United Nations communications, in order to prevent the aggressor State from attempting to shift the blame for the conflict onto the State that was defending itself.

8. A global and systemic approach was required to tackle all attempts to falsify information and use it to legitimize violations of the Charter and wars of aggression, as well as to undermine public safety, peace and security. Disinformation and propaganda promoting the war should be clearly dissociated from professional journalism. Russian journalists had incited hatred towards Ukrainians, thus bringing war and suffering to Ukraine, and had sought to glorify the Russian Army and justify violations of the Charter by Russia. It was also important to honour the 66 media workers, including 10 journalists, who had been killed as a result of the Russian invasion. Others had received death threats, gone missing or been abducted, shot at or wounded by Russian troops. For example, on 19 September 2023, a suicide drone had struck the car of a crew from the Swedish television channel TV4, injuring several people.

9. Her delegation encouraged Member States to focus on tackling disinformation and misinformation during Global Media and Information Literacy Week in accordance with General Assembly resolution [75/267](#).

10. **Mr. Ngouambe Wouaga** (Cameroon) said that his delegation commended the United Nations for its ongoing reforms to communication activities and information networks, with a view to amplifying its message and encouraging greater participation in United Nations initiatives. It commended the Department of Global Communications for its implementation of the global communication strategy in response to the propagation of fake news, hate speech, misinformation and disinformation, in particular on digital platforms. In that connection, Cameroon supported the proposed code of conduct for information integrity on digital platforms, which would define responsibilities for public authorities and private actors. It also supported the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and the steps taken by the Central African States

to adopt a regional strategy. The Department was encouraged to strengthen its programmes aimed at promoting peace, tolerance and coexistence, in particular those targeting young people.

11. His delegation welcomed the Department’s efforts to better coordinate communication activities with other United Nations entities at the local level, which would have a particular impact on developing countries. The communications approach of the Department to climate-related issues was also welcome and should be extended to the United Nations information centres with a view to increasing visibility and adapting messages to the local realities of the target audiences, which could improve ownership and awareness. Information and communications technologies should be complemented by traditional media to reach the widest audience.

12. In order to expand the scope of the Department, it was essential to ensure linguistic parity in its communications and respect multilingualism in negotiation processes. Issues such as the digital divide and the lack of Internet access in developing countries must also be addressed. Multilingualism guaranteed effectiveness and transparency in the work of the United Nations and was a tool for revitalizing multilateralism and making it more democratic and inclusive. The Department should adopt measures to correct imbalances in the use of United Nations languages. For example, it must move beyond the tendency to translate English content and instead produce more original content. Entities of the Organization, in particular the Department and the Office of Information and Communications Technology, should work in synergy to develop innovative solutions and enhance multilingualism on digital platforms, while also developing traditional communication channels.

13. **Ms. Al-mashehari** (Yemen) said that intercultural dialogue should be encouraged in order to combat the alarming proliferation of hate speech, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, negative stereotypes and related intolerance. In view of the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation, action should be taken to strengthen fact-checking processes and raise awareness of the need to verify information before sharing it. Those trends were particularly concerning in view of the Israeli occupation forces’ assault on the Gaza Strip, which had claimed thousands of civilian lives. The denial of water, electricity, food and fuel had caused an unprecedented humanitarian disaster. Those actions amounted to a war crime and a crime against humanity. Most recently, the deliberate bombardment of the Ahli Arab Hospital on 17 October 2023 had killed hundreds of innocent civilians. The international community must abandon its double standards, press for

an immediate ceasefire and the swift delivery of humanitarian aid, and resist any endeavour to forcibly displace the Palestinian people.

14. Training courses should be organized and financial support should be made available with a view to bridging the digital divide. By upholding the principle of the equality of all official languages, the United Nations could help ensure that its work was inclusive and transparent.

15. **Mr. Woodfield** (United Kingdom) said that the United Nations played a vital role in providing accurate, impartial and fact-based reporting, but the task was becoming more difficult every year. Member States had a responsibility to protect the integrity of the United Nations as a trusted source of information. His delegation was therefore concerned about the harmful disinformation spread by some Member States about the United Nations, in particular its peacekeeping operations in the field, and supported the plan of the Department of Global Communications to develop an information integrity laboratory to support such operations and quickly rebut false allegations.

16. Since its illegal invasion of Ukraine, Russia had been exploiting the Security Council as a platform for disinformation. Without precedent, it had invited dozens of individuals as briefers to spread conspiracy theories, which had repeatedly been proven demonstrably false by United Nations experts. Its disinformation campaign distracted from the awful reality of its crimes on the ground and had degraded the level of discussion in the Security Council. The United Kingdom would continue to expose disinformation and hold Russia accountable for its actions.

17. Member States and digital platforms had a responsibility to keep pace with rapid developments in technology and manage them in order to protect billions of users. In addition, platforms should take steps to improve transparency regarding algorithms and content moderation. In that regard, his Government had passed an online safety bill in 2023. The United Kingdom strongly supported the development of the code of conduct for information integrity on digital platforms as a means of supporting similar national efforts around the world and encouraged Member States to work with the Department to that end. In developing the code of conduct, the Department should protect the right to freedom of expression and respect the careful balance in international human rights law regarding the kinds of speech that must be prohibited. The international community must do more to tackle the widening digital divide that exacerbated information inequality and must

equip users with the digital literacy skills to recognize and challenge misinformation and disinformation.

18. **Ms. Guzik Duno** (Mexico) said that her delegation welcomed the efforts under way to strengthen multilingualism in the United Nations global communications strategy, while recognizing that more needed to be done. It was important to stress that, without the necessary budgetary resources, it would not be possible to achieve the goals of the Committee on Information, such as delivering press releases in all official languages.

19. The Department of Global Communications should make more systematic use of the data available to the Organization. In that connection, it would have been useful to see the inclusion of substantive elements in the report of the Secretary-General on the ways in which the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere was being used to achieve global communications goals. Data analysis and use were key to combating hate speech and disinformation, in particular with regard to peacekeeping missions, which had been the target of hostile campaigns that distorted and delegitimized the work of the United Nations and endangered the lives of personnel. Data analysis could also help to determine what content should be made available to the public in specific languages. Since Spanish speakers had been the second largest language group to consult the United Nations News website, her delegation hoped that the quantity and diversity of information available in that language would be commensurate with the demand.

20. As multilateralism was increasingly being called into question, the international community must make a collective effort to better communicate about the work of the United Nations, including by strengthening partnerships with civil society and members of the press. The Department must use resources more efficiently to ensure that United Nations communications conveyed timely and relevant messages and improved understanding of the importance of the multilateral system.

21. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that his delegation commended the Department of Global Communications for facilitating access to information on the work of the United Nations. Rapid technological advances in the digital age had undoubtedly brought benefits but also posed challenges, such as the spread of misinformation and cyberthreats. Access to information had largely been undermined in Myanmar since the illegal military coup in February 2021. Under the junta's digital dictatorship, freedom of opinion and expression were systematically and widely violated, and strict censorship

rules had been imposed. The military junta had shut down 13 media outlets and seized control of others. At least 156 journalists had been arrested, and a number had been killed. The junta had restricted Internet access and introduced frequent Internet blackouts, in particular in conflict-affected areas. Social media platforms were occasionally blocked to prevent communication. All people, including those in conflict-afflicted areas, must have adequate access to information. In Myanmar, people used the Internet or telecommunications services to inform each other of the movements of the junta's warplanes and troops in order to have enough time to take shelter.

22. The military had employed misinformation and disinformation campaigns to manipulate public opinion and distort the truth through military-controlled media and social media accounts. For example, it had recently carried out an attack on a camp for internally displaced persons in Laiza, Kachin State, and then blamed the Kachin Independence Organization. In addition, the junta had intensified surveillance measures to identify individuals who supported the democratic movement, creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, and its affiliates and staff misused social media to instigate the arrest of innocent civilians.

23. The only way to stop the unspeakable suffering in Myanmar and guarantee adequate access to information was to end the military coup, restore democracy and build a democratic union with effective, inclusive and accountable institutions. His delegation urged the United Nations and its Member States to stand with the people of Myanmar by taking decisive, timely action against the military dictatorship.

24. **Ms. Shapir Ben Naftaly** (Israel) said that the Israeli people had been the target of merciless hate and evil perpetrated by a genocidal terrorist organization seeking their destruction. Thousands of Hamas terrorists had entered Israel and massacred 1,400 innocent people in cold blood in the early hours of 7 October 2023. They had come to slaughter, rape, kidnap and burned people alive, and had proudly live-streamed those atrocities on social media for the world to see.

25. Israel was fighting a war, initiated by Hamas on Israeli soil, to defeat terror and defend civilians. At the same time, a battle in the digital space and on social media platforms must also be won. Hamas used propaganda and disinformation to spread terror, fear and hate. It used the media to deny its slaughter, spread fake news and further terrorize civilians. However, responsibility for weaponizing the media did not lie solely with Hamas; every media outlet that promoted its lies was complicit in its jihad war on humanity and was

responsible for emboldening terrorists and legitimizing war crimes. On 17 October 2023, when a Palestinian Islamic Jihad rocket had misfired and hit a hospital parking lot, Hamas had exploited the opportunity to falsely blame Israel. Without fact-checking or verification, the international community had swallowed those lies without hesitation. As a result, violent mass protests had broken out across the world, endangering the lives of Jews everywhere. Even after damning evidence had made it clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that jihadist terrorists had been responsible for the deaths at the hospital, anti-Israeli disinformation continued to be promoted. The international community must tackle misinformation and disinformation, as well as the misuse of media and social media by terrorist organizations.

26. In the digital age, information in the wrong hands spread evil and hate, but information could also unite people, enhance transparency and foster meaningful dialogue. Israel had always sought to expand the frontiers of human knowledge and share its discoveries with the world. In that context, Israel recognized the role of the Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme in educating future generations about those unspeakable atrocities and pledged to continue its cooperation in that vital endeavour. The Jewish people had not faced a massacre on the scale of the attack of 7 October since the Holocaust. Regrettably, in its wake, they had borne witness to unprecedented levels of antisemitism on a global scale. The international community must therefore redouble its efforts to promote Holocaust remembrance and combat antisemitism at the national and multilateral levels.

27. Anyone believing and spreading misinformation by Hamas and terrorist organizations was complicit in their crimes. By repeating the baseless and hateful narrative promoted by a terrorist organization, they were adopting and promoting terrorist propaganda and actively inviting hatred against Israel and Jews around the world. That applied to the United Nations and its entities and high-ranking officials.

28. **Mr. Strzhizhovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that the Department of Global Communications had a responsibility to provide factual, timely and impartial information on the Organization's websites and through its information services. It must not allow the publication of one-sided interpretations of events or the ill-informed and politicized opinions of some of the Organization's officials to jeopardize the high standards of the United Nations media outlets.

29. His delegation noted the Secretariat's ongoing development of the global code of conduct for

information integrity on digital platforms and its efforts to address challenges in the digital space. Noting that the digital space was not the preserve of Western nations, his delegation urged the Department to do its utmost to engage with all Member States to ensure the broadest possible support for the Secretary-General's initiatives.

30. The Russian Federation had consistently advocated the elaboration of universal international rules to regulate Internet intermediaries in view of the global reach of the services provided by the largest information technology companies and the need for a consolidated response to the resulting risks and challenges. Although the States with jurisdiction over those companies were currently unwilling to implement such an approach, it was imperative that the companies comply strictly with the laws of both the States in which they were based and the States in which they operated. His delegation was ready to take part in broad, mutually respectful State-led discussions in that regard.

31. Long before the crisis in Ukraine had turned into an all-out war, the Russian Federation had become the target of a far-reaching information war, as evidenced by the statements made by the representatives of certain Western nations and their allies. His delegation called on all delegations, including the delegation of Ukraine, to focus on the topic at hand and refrain from taking every opportunity to spread disinformation and air their own political views. No one was convinced by the handwringing over the safety of journalists by States that had themselves tracked and killed Russian journalists, including Daria Dugina and Vladlen Tatarskiy.

32. Information attacks against the Russian Federation consisted of unrelenting efforts to impose one-sided pro-Western interpretations of world events on the international community and the complete suppression of any alternative information sources that contradicted the neoliberal mainstream, targeting in particular pro-Russian media outlets in the West. The latest egregious example was the deportation from Cyprus of the Russian journalist Alexander Gasyuk, who had endured psychological pressure to leave, followed by a brutal beating. Such methods continued to be used against the few remaining sources of inconvenient truths under the false pretext of fighting disinformation. Countries with supposedly advanced democracies had committed numerous grave violations of their obligations to uphold media pluralism and the rights of journalists in recent months. For example, the European Union had suspended the licences of several Russian media outlets and expanded the list of banned journalists and heads of media outlets. A Russian reporter had been denied entry

to a press conference with the French President, and broadcasting in the Russian language had been banned in Latvia. International institutions, in particular the United Nations, must be unequivocal in their response to such incidents.

33. **Ms. Rios** (Plurinational State of Bolivia) said that the unprecedented speed at which information flowed had contributed to reinventing traditional media and creating new ways for States and international organizations to manage information. However, the abundance of information had also given rise to risks, such as those concerning the reliability of information and the ease of sharing and creating online content. Fake news and disinformation could promote hate speech and have serious consequences for policies and societies as a whole. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had accentuated such challenges. It was therefore important to promote critical thinking skills, digital literacy and access to quality information. While the international community must be aware of the challenges related to information in the current digital era, it should also take advantage of the opportunities it presented in order to promote innovation, education and informed decision-making.

34. Information and communications technology had empowered women, allowing them to connect, share their experiences and express themselves. At the same time, such technologies had led to new forms of harassment and abuse, such as cyberabuse and human trafficking, which disproportionately affected women. It was therefore essential to include a gender perspective in managing information and continue to reduce the significant gender gap in Internet access.

35. Multilingualism was a fundamental pillar of the Organization that reflected its commitment to cultural and linguistic diversity. Her delegation therefore called for all meetings and documents of the United Nations to be interpreted and translated into the various official languages. Furthermore, as a United Nations entity, the International Court of Justice should incorporate other working languages, including Spanish.

36. Her Government was committed to improving access to information and its management, because freedom of expression was an essential part of any democracy. In accordance with the country's Constitution, 36 Indigenous languages were recognized as official languages alongside Spanish, and her Government was implementing a strategy to revitalize and strengthen those languages. United Nations entities and other international organizations were encouraged to translate international instruments into Indigenous languages.

37. **Ms. Turnbull** (Canada) said that, in the 48 hours since the devastating explosion at the Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza, vastly different narratives had been heard in the halls of the United Nations. At such times, delegates and the citizens of their countries turned to the United Nations for information. Permanent Missions should emulate the Organization's high standard of information integrity in their use of social media channels.

38. Misinformation and disinformation could spread rapidly, create uncertainty, and fuel scepticism and distrust, the perfect environment for fear, xenophobia, violence and a disregard for scientific and medical advice. Strong democracies needed diverse and reliable sources of news and information so that their citizens could form their own opinions, hold Governments and individuals accountable and participate in public debate. Citizens must be equipped with the tools and skills to critically assess online information.

39. Canadians spoke more than 200 languages, including 70 Indigenous languages. Her delegation therefore commended the Department's efforts to promote linguistic diversity while remaining a credible, impartial and unbiased source of information. Multilingualism helped promote the Organization's efforts to a global audience and also served as a lubricant for multilateral diplomacy. Her delegation called for strengthened initiatives to restore the balance among the six official languages, including French, in traditional and digital content.

40. Her Government had appointed the former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, as its new Special Envoy for Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism. She would be serving alongside Amira Elghawaby, her country's Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia, in responding to the rising dangers of hatred in all its forms.

41. Her delegation looked forward to engaging with the recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's code of conduct for information integrity on digital platforms, to ensure alignment with and input from some of its own efforts in that regard, including the Global Declaration on Information Integrity Online, which had been launched in September 2023.

42. **Mr. Van Schalkwyk** (South Africa) said that his delegation urged the Department to continue to support and strengthen the United Nations information centres and to provide global audiences with clear, timely, accurate, reliable, comprehensive and unbiased information about the work of the Organization. It

welcomed the Department's efforts to activate the most crisis communication cells ever at one time, and encouraged it to focus also on such challenging issues as conflict situations and climate change. In that regard, it encouraged the Department to focus on peace and security matters in all regions of the world equally, in order to provide the public with comprehensive information and raise awareness of the full range of work of the United Nations. South Africa welcomed the Department's plans to forge partnerships with global media houses, Member States and civil society organizations to expand its reach. It equally welcomed its collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth to highlight the role of youth in addressing contemporary challenges, including as first responders in humanitarian crises.

43. The United Nations information centres played a significant role in promoting greater understanding of and support for the aims and activities of the Organization. For example, the information centre in Pretoria had co-produced a book in which quotations from the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, were paired with the Sustainable Development Goals and calls for individual action.

44. South Africa was pleased to be involved in the Africa Renewal platform, which the Department had used to cast a spotlight on gender equality and women's empowerment and role in continental trade, climate justice and vaccine equity. Lastly, South Africa commended the Department for renaming its training programme for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists to honour Shireen Abu Akleh, the Palestinian-American reporter who had been killed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory on 11 May 2022. Her name would serve as a reminder that the targeting of journalists was unacceptable and contemptible.

45. **Mr. Al-Thani** (Qatar) said that his delegation was deeply concerned about developments in the Gaza Strip and called on all parties to stop the hostilities, protect civilians, open humanitarian corridors, conclude a ceasefire and work towards a just and comprehensive peace. Attempts to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from the Gaza Strip were alarming. The Palestinian people had a right to establish an independent State on the borders of 4 June 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

46. The Department and the United Nations had a pivotal role to play in advancing the Organization's credibility. For that purpose, they must provide transparent, objective, accurate and neutral information. The special information programme on the question of Palestine, in particular, played a significant part in

raising awareness of one of the most longstanding issues on the Organization's agenda. The Department should work to ensure the equal treatment of all official languages. While the Arabic section of the official United Nations website had improved markedly, it needed further improvement and additional resources.

47. The development of new technologies, including artificial intelligence, exacerbated the threat posed by misinformation and disinformation. Expertise should be shared and regulatory action taken to pre-empt the problem. Action should also be taken to tackle the use of the media and social media to spread hate, particularly Islamophobia.

48. Owing to the joint efforts of the Department of Global Communications and the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, considerable progress had been made in digitizing the United Nations archives and improving searchability. His Government had provided \$5 million towards the first phase of that project and \$2.5 million towards the second phase.

49. **Mr. Bamy** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the first tool of war was dehumanization, which made possible all of the crimes that followed. Israel was conducting a public relations campaign to dehumanize Palestinians, which included the Israeli minister of war calling Palestinians in Gaza "human animals". That dehumanization had sometimes found its way into media coverage and into speeches at the United Nations. Israel was still killing Palestinians and blaming them for their own deaths, while denying responsibility for their fate. The former Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir, had once said: "We will never forgive the Arabs for forcing us to kill their children". No more dehumanizing or insulting sentence had ever been spoken. Israel always argued that it had been forced to dispossess, kill and colonize Palestinians, while also claiming, for the past 75 years, that nothing could justify the killing of Israeli civilians. Such a racist and supremacist narrative breached the most fundamental rules of international law.

50. People who otherwise considered the siege of a population to be a form of collective punishment, a war crime and an act of terror were ready to legitimize the siege of Gaza. They called for ceasefires elsewhere, but were unable to call for an end to the current assault on mostly civilian victims, in which 4,000 Palestinians had been killed in the past 10 days. While millions were demonstrating in the street around the world, some Governments, notably in the West, were having difficulty formulating a coherent position grounded in international law.

51. His delegation appreciated the naming of the Training Programme for Palestinian Broadcasters and Journalists after Shireen Abu Akleh. The Prime Minister of Israel had initially blamed Palestinians for her killing, and it had taken weeks of pressure from journalists and States for the obvious to be recognized.

52. Five wars had been fought over Gaza. When United Nations and independent investigators had been present, they had demonstrated that Israel had shelled hospitals, schools and shelters, killing entire families. Israel was currently telling people to head south and then bombing convoys headed in that very direction. It had issued evacuation orders to 1 million people, including the wounded and babies in hospitals, even though they had nowhere to go, a situation the United Nations had called a death sentence for many. People were on the verge of mass death, unable to find food and water. Israel, however, denied responsibility and engaged in social media campaigns to silenced those who rejected its propaganda.

53. The Holocaust had been one of the worst horrors ever witnessed by humanity. Along with the other horrors of the Second World War, it was the reason for the existence of the Charter of the United Nations, the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Holocaust should never be used to justify the commission of war crimes and the killing of other people.

54. His delegation called on the Department of Global Communications to intensify its efforts to highlight what the United Nations had characterized as epic human suffering in Gaza and to raise its voice in defence of the Charter, humanitarian principles and human rights, to stop the bloodshed and the massacres, and to advance freedom and justice. Even while Israel was killing Palestinians, the goal of the Palestinian people was for both Palestinians and Israelis to live and coexist.

55. **Ms. Elardja Flitti** (Observer for the League of Arab States) said that the League welcomed the focus, in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Our Common Agenda" (A/75/982), on transparent United Nations media services in all official languages. The League welcomed the Department's pivotal role in promoting multilingualism and raising awareness of Arab issues, foremost among which was the question of Palestine, and in covering developments in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iraq, the Sudan and Somalia. Current events had made clear the destructive impact of misinformation and disinformation. The United Nations media services should highlight the suffering of peoples under occupation, particularly the Palestinian people, and the content of the relevant reports compiled by United



Nations entities. Whereas they had recently given intensive coverage to such issues as the Ukrainian crisis, their approach to the question of Palestine had been more timid. They should assist national media in combating imported extremist religious and social ideas, and strengthen dialogue among all religions and civilizations. The United Nations should build resilient connections with national and regional Arab media and invest in all forms of social media, with a particular focus on sign language. Emphasis should be placed on radio, which could be used to garner support for the United Nations, particularly in remote and least developed areas of the Arab world, where resource for accurate reporting and fact-checking were often inadequate.

56. The League had strengthened its relations with United Nations media offices in the Arab region, particularly in Cairo. It had adopted a similar approach for its five-pronged strategic media plan to support the Sustainable Development Goals, foster a positive image of the Goals in the Arab world, improve media output in its States members with respect to development issues, and foster relevant initiatives at the level of the League. It focused on three core issues, namely the need to resolve the question of Palestine, combat terrorism and extremism, and promote accurate representations of Arabs and Muslims.

57. In view of the challenges posed by the digital age, the United Nations should endeavour to publish verified information and avoid implicit bias or double standards. Action should be taken to codify the prohibition on targeting journalists in conflict zones, and to hold accountable anyone who did so. Of particular note were the killing of Shireen Abu Akleh on 11 May 2022 and of 11 journalists in the current Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip. Adequate support should be extended to independent media working in the public interest. A United Nations fact-checking service should be established.

58. **Mr. Nkalwo** (Observer for the International Organization of La Francophonie) said that, despite the significant efforts made in recent years, major disparities persisted in United Nations communications between English and the other five official languages. For example, the visuals and banners during the recent Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the Sustainable Development Goals Action Weekend reflected a worrying trend towards monolingualism. Addressing those disparities required advance planning to better utilize available resources for campaigns and communications in the different languages.

59. The fight against disinformation should be based on a multilingual approach, with the Department broadening access to trustworthy, objective information in the different languages on United Nations digital platforms. The gap between the amount of information available in English and in other languages should be addressed so that no linguistic community was left behind. The Department should develop a culture of multilingualism within its unit responsible for combating disinformation, and conduct campaigns and multi-stakeholder processes aimed at promoting information integrity while respecting the Organization's language policy. It should also take advantage of the knowledge of the fact-checkers working in the different languages and reinforce collaboration among them.

60. It was also important to conduct awareness-raising campaigns on disinformation for the general public in different languages to reach a larger audience while also taking into account the various ways that digital platforms were used. His organization supported awareness-raising for francophone populations on the prejudices caused by disinformation, as well as digital literacy campaigns in French and local languages.

61. Disinformation tactics were constantly evolving. It was therefore crucial to support research on disinformation in different languages and different cultural contexts, and to develop multilingual resources for key actors in the fight against disinformation. His organization commended the Department for its efforts to ensure multilingualism in consultations on the code of conduct for information integrity on digital platforms.

*Draft resolution A: Information in the service of humanity (A/78/21 (chap. IV))*

*Draft resolution B: United Nations global communications policies and activities (A/78/21 (chap. IV))*

62. **The Chair** said that the draft resolutions had no programme budget implications.

63. *Draft resolution A was adopted.*

64. *Draft resolution B was adopted.*

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

65. **Ms. Tokarska** (Ukraine) said that, once again, the Russian Federation was pretending to be a victim, despite being the aggressor, a basic element of its war propaganda. More often than not, the supposed victims of Ukrainian crimes were actually killed as a result of clashes between different groups of influence inside the

Russian Federation. Calling Vladlen Tatarskiy a journalist was an insult to all real journalists. He had been serving a sentence for a bank robbery in Donbas before being freed by the Russian Federation occupation forces in 2014 and joining them. The Russian Federation had always relied on criminals; the glorification of murders committed by the infamous Wagner Group was another recent example. In a video recorded in the Kremlin in September 2022 after a ceremony marking the accession of newly annexed territories to the Russian Federation, Mr. Tatarskiy had proclaimed: “We will kill everyone. We will rob everyone who needs to be robbed. Everything will be the way we love”. However, he had become extremely critical of the Russian military command following the retreat of Russian troops from Kherson. Moreover, he had ties to Yevgeny Prigozhin. Although the Russian Federation was very sympathetic to anti-Ukrainian sentiment, criticizing those in power was taboo for everyone beyond the inner circle of President Vladimir Putin. Doing so had sealed the fate of Mr. Tatarskiy and, later, that of his master, Mr. Prigozhin.

66. It was in everyone’s common interest to remain united against any attempt to justify what could not be justified: the violation of the Charter, the Nazi- and colonial-style invasion of a sovereign neighbouring country, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

67. **Ms. Shapir Ben Naftaly** (Israel), responding to the remarks by the representative of the observer State of Palestine, said that she proudly represented Israel and the memory of the people of Kibbutz Be’eri and Kfar Aza, and the Nova festivalgoers. In her country, officials did not think twice before condemning and mourning any civilian lives lost, unlike the Palestinian Authority, which had never condemned Hamas and instead echoed its terror propaganda.

68. Dehumanization was not, in fact, the first tool of war. On 7 October, the first tool of war used against the Israeli people by Hamas terrorists had been the thousands of rockets, which were still being fired towards every city in Israel, as well as axes, grenades and knives used to stab pregnant women. The people of Kibbutz Be’eri and Kfar Aza, along with the partygoers at the Nova festival, had prayed for an opportunity to evacuate, but had not been able to do so.

69. Regarding the Holocaust, few world leaders had denied the Holocaust and held its victims in contempt as outrageously as Mahmoud Abbas. The Palestinian representative would therefore be better advised not to refer to the Holocaust.

70. **Ms. Demosthenous** (Cyprus), responding to the statement made by the representative of the Russian

Federation, said that it was unfortunate that the deportation of a journalist from her country had been raised in the Committee. The journalist had been deported for reasons of national security, as there had been serious concerns related to that individual’s activities on the island. Cyprus was a country where the rule of law prevailed. Freedom of expression and freedom of press were protected by law and in practice.

71. **Mr. Bamyia** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the Governments in Israel and the State of Palestine were acting very differently. His Government was unequivocally rejecting the killing of civilians. Its representatives were not coming to the United Nations to justify killings, but rather to save lives. His delegation was not asking Israel to condemn and mourn the killing of Palestinians; it was asking its Government to stop killing them. That Government could not evade its responsibility for the fate of the Palestinians while at the same time bombing them. The claim that the State of Palestine was repeating terror propaganda was an example of disinformation. Far from spreading terror propaganda, he had merely spoken of international law, quoted the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and stated that Israel had no right to target and kill Palestinian civilians, launch indiscriminate attacks and commit war crimes.

72. The representative of Israel had argued that the first tool of war was not dehumanization but the means of war. That argument was absurd; Israel was itself bombing civilian populations and using white phosphorous. While deploring the killing of civilians, Israel was doing precisely that. It refused to recognize the rules of international law, which was the only standard by which all parties was measured. The representative of Israel accused his delegation, which was talking about peace, of creating terror propaganda. She claimed that Israel, which was trying to justify war crimes, was a peaceful actor.

73. He was speaking on behalf of his leadership when he said that the State of Palestine did not deny the Holocaust. The Holocaust had been one of the worst horrors of the twentieth century. Along with the other horrors of the Second World War, it had led to the creation of the United Nations. Israel could not, however, instrumentalize it to justify the killing of Palestinians and desecrate their memory. As part of the human family and community of nations, Palestine was entitled to become a free nation, and the free nations in the Committee stood in solidarity with it.

74. The State of Palestine recognized Israel, but the reverse was not true. The representative of Israel, for her part, should state that she recognized the State of

Palestine. She should call on her Government to stop killing Palestinian civilians honour the memory of Holocaust victims, and of all victims, by standing for international law and respecting humanity and the principles of humanity and distinction. If she was speaking on behalf of her Government, she was in no position to take the moral high ground. Israel should stop the killing and bloodshed in the Gaza Strip, grant the Palestinian people their freedom and ensure peace and security for Palestinians, Israelis, the region and the world.

*The meeting rose at 5.15 p.m.*