



**SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE**  
11th meeting  
held on  
**Tuesday, 25 October 1983**  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING**

Chairman: Mr. RODRIGUEZ-MEDINA (Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 72: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/SPC/38/L.3 and L.5)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued) (A/38/21)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/38/387 and Add.1)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued) (A/38/457)

1. The CHAIRMAN, referring to the statement made by the representative of Cuba at the Committee's 10th meeting, informed members that the representative of Cuba had contacted the Chair and had reaffirmed his wish that those parts of his statement which pertained to information should be reported in extenso in the summary record. An agreement had been reached to that effect.

2. Mr. AIBORNOZ (Ecuador) said that the mass media constituted a powerful force in modern times and therefore must not be excluded from discussions on the progress and destiny of peoples. Accordingly, the international community should seek ways of ensuring responsible participation by the media in its endeavours, particularly at a time when unprecedented political and economic crises were threatening peace and harmony among peoples.

3. For that reason, the General Assembly had established the Committee on Information, which, in the recommendations it had adopted by consensus, had succeeded in finding the common denominators of countries holding very diverse positions. The resolutions adopted on that item had, for the same reason, consistently stressed the importance of freedom of information as a basic element of human rights. For his country, those elements also included the principle of freedom of thought and the free circulation and wider dissemination of information, together with free access to sources of information, freedom and guarantees for journalists and freedom to enter or to leave a country in order to work as a journalist.

4. In that connection, he drew attention to draft resolution A/SPC/38/L.5, which, like similar resolutions adopted previously, appealed to both public and private news media and to non-governmental organizations throughout the world to disseminate more comprehensive and more objective information about the work of the United Nations and in particular about the efforts of the developing countries to achieve economic, social and cultural progress. That was especially important in view of the deliberate curtain of silence in which the major news media had shrouded such activities, despite the fact that they accounted for 80 per cent of the work of the United Nations and the fact that the development undertaking was surely the only way of dealing with the disparities, crises and injustices of the modern world. There was also a direct connection - although some circles sought to deny it - between information and development, which was the ultimate objective of all efforts to achieve peace and disarmament.

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(Mr. Albornoz, Ecuador)

5. Since the meagre information currently disseminated about the United Nations dealt with only the political aspects of its work, the Committee should reiterate its appeal for greater attention to the economic, social and cultural aspects of its work. However, the discussion of agenda item 72 and the mandate of the Committee on Information should focus on the political and philosophical aspects of the question of information and should not in any way interfere with the activities of the Department of Public Information. Attention must also be focused on topics that were crucial to the overall image of the United Nations, particularly in the eyes of an anguished world which, in the face of a senseless slide towards nuclear disaster, was turning to the United Nations and demanding peace and justice. For example, the Committee on Information should be asked to undertake preparations for the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations, which was to be celebrated in 1985. Moreover, the Special Political Committee should respond, through impartial and reliable news media, to all those who wished to muffle the echo of United Nations discussions and resolutions and who considered the Organization an alien inconvenience which should no longer enjoy the hospitality originally extended to it.

6. The benighted attitude of the news media and of functionaries of ephemeral importance was in sharp contrast to the attitude of those who had drafted the Charter of the United Nations, those who had offered land at their own expense, and those who had sought to endow the world as a whole and every country with an international conscience, which was essential for understanding between peoples and the common cause of human survival.

7. Accordingly, the recommendations adopted by the Committee on Information, reproduced in the annex to draft resolution A/SPC/38/L.5, contained another appeal to the whole United Nations system to co-operate, in a concerted manner, in promoting the activities of the United Nations and in reaffirming its image, as reflected in its essential but unreported role of improving the living conditions of the people of the developing countries. Another appeal was addressed to the developed countries, calling on them to co-operate in strengthening the news media and news agencies of the developing countries, particularly with regard to their infrastructures and the training of personnel. In that connection, the International Programme for the Development of Communication and the specialized work of both UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union had a specific and timely role to play. In addition, he welcomed the growing number of journalists and journalism students sent from developing countries to large information centres in the industrialized countries and the assignment of correspondents from major news agencies to the developing countries. Similarly, he noted with satisfaction the meetings of chief editors, sponsored by the United Nations, to discuss topics related to information, a commendable example of which was the round table on a new world information and communication order, mentioned in document A/38/387 (para. 4). However, the assignment of correspondents to the developing countries would be useful, provided that it resulted in balanced reporting not only of the failures, mistakes and misfortunes of those countries but also of their achievements and, in particular, of their bold efforts to preserve their democratic institutions despite difficulties and crises. In accordance with

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United Nations efforts to achieve common progress and to reduce tension through the transfer of technology, the Department of Public Information should co-operate more closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), both at Headquarters and in the field. For example, information centres in the industrialized countries could help to inform the official circles in those countries about the work of UNDP.

8. In the space age, communications could either help to improve the living conditions of peoples or be used by technologically or financially powerful States to dominate less advanced peoples. Accordingly, when the subject of remote sensing was discussed in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, his delegation had always supported the principle that the prior consent of the sensed State was required both for the sensing itself and for the use of the data thus obtained, particularly when such data were transferred to third countries. Similarly, the use by States of artificial earth satellites for direct television broadcasting should be governed by equitable international norms applicable both to broadcasting countries and to the audience, which must be provided with a choice of programming, for otherwise the principle of freedom of information would be meaningless. To that end, there should be greater contact between the Committee on Information and the Outer Space Committee, and he therefore welcomed the fact that the Special Political Committee dealt with the reports of both bodies.

9. The strongest support for the activities of the United Nations came from public opinion. Therefore, in dealing with questions relating to information, it was the Committee's task to provide public opinion with reliable information about the Organization's activities and to induce the news media to reflect the efforts and the cultural, economic and social identity of the poorer peoples of the world.

10. Mr. LAPITSKI (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that consideration of how the United Nations and its Member States were helping to solve the key problem of averting the threat of nuclear war by their policy and practical activities in the fields of information and communications rightly occupied a central place in the Committee's scrutiny of questions relating to information. It was particularly important to examine information questions from that point of view at a time when the international situation had become extremely acute owing to the increased activity of aggressive imperialist forces. The United States was effecting an unprecedented increase in its military potential, starting to implement a dangerous plan to deploy medium-range missiles which were in fact first-strike nuclear weapons adjacent to the frontiers of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries and propagating the idea that nuclear war was both possible and permissible. The Soviet State and the entire socialist community were doing everything they could to change the dangerous course of events, as was shown by numerous Soviet peace initiatives. The Soviet Union's unilateral undertaking not to be the first to use nuclear weapons and its appeal to other nuclear Powers to follow its example were of enduring historical significance.

(Mr. Lapitski, Ukrainian SSR)

11. In their Prague Declaration, the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty had condemned the use of the mass media to spread slanderous reports which sowed alienation and enmity and had said that no State should allow its territory to be used for such subversive activity. The draft declaration on the condemnation of nuclear war submitted to the United Nations by the Soviet Union proposed that not only the formulation but also the propagation of political and military doctrines and concepts designed to substantiate the legality of the first use of nuclear weapons and the permissibility of unleashing nuclear war should be proclaimed criminal acts.

12. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries was also an active force for restructuring international information exchanges on fair and democratic principles. He reaffirmed his country's solidarity with the struggle of the peoples of those countries for independence in the field of information and communications and for equality and balance in information exchanges. It supported the decisions taken at conferences of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries aimed at establishing a new international order in the field of information and communications which would be based on respect for the sovereignty and equality of States, aid for developing countries in creating national and regional systems of mass information which were independent of foreign information monopolies, and the promotion of peace and international understanding in every possible way.

13. His delegation felt compelled to point out that some NATO countries, primarily the United States, were continuing to disregard the General Assembly and existing norms of international law in their information activity. Washington's current course was to whip up anti-Soviet and anti-Communist hysteria and to sow hatred for the peoples struggling for social and national liberation. In an attempt to justify its military programme, the United States of America was continuing to spread fabrications about a Soviet threat and about a supposed lag in its own weapons production. At the same time, propaganda was being systematically waged against mass movements opposed to nuclear weapons, and the Salvadorian insurgents and those fighting for the national rights of the Palestinian people were being labelled terrorists. A new wave of insulting attacks on the United Nations had also been recently inspired in the United States press.

14. The United States had drawn up a programme envisaging a whole range of subversive propaganda actions against the socialist countries and many developing countries. Particular emphasis continued to be placed on such subversive radio stations sponsored by the United States as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe and a similar station for hostile propaganda against Cuba had recently been established. His delegation considered such activities impermissible and believed that they should be condemned by the General Assembly. It wished to emphasize that the efforts of some States to cloak their unsavoury activities with references to freedom of the press were intended merely to avoid responsibility for spreading tendentious information and carrying out acts of psychological warfare.

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15. Facts confirmed over and over again the need for strict observance of the norms and principles of international law in international exchanges of information. Information activities had to promote better understanding and growing trust among nations, and, to that end, observance of the principles of sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, self-determination and equality of rights was of primary importance. He also wished to underline the importance of the principle of the responsible use of the mass media as laid down in articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

16. In view of the acute need for the information and communications media to make a greater contribution to strengthening peace, his delegation noted the particular topicality of the recommendation by the Committee on Information that the resolution to be adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session should indicate the necessity of creating a climate of trust in inter-State relations and should call on all States and mass information media to promote the strengthening of peace and mutual understanding. His delegation also considered most appropriate the recommendation of the Committee on Information that the General Assembly should note the impending fifth anniversary of UNESCO's declaration on fundamental principles concerning the contribution of the mass media to strengthening peace and international understanding; that could be done by adopting a suitable resolution.

17. The facts showed the urgent need for the General Assembly to take effective measures to halt the current misuse of radio broadcasting in information activities. An important role could be played in that respect by the International Convention concerning the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace. The General Assembly should note the importance of that Convention and call upon States which had not yet endorsed it to do so.

18. His delegation also took a favourable view of the recommendations of the Committee on Information for promoting the establishment of a new international information order and believed that they deserved the General Assembly's approval. The adoption of effective measures for the earliest possible creation of a new international information order should occupy a leading place in the work of the Committee on Information, the Department of Public Information and other United Nations bodies and agencies. Greater attention should be paid to such matters because serious obstacles were being raised by imperialist circles striving to slow the process of decolonization in the information and communications field, as evidenced by the constantly increasing efforts of some Western States to spread the idea of a free flow of information. That idea in reality served imperialism and the transnational corporations, since such flow could be really free only if there were guarantees that all States could take an equal part in information activities. Otherwise, free flow would mean only freedom of action for imperialist information monopolies in the developing countries.

19. Implementation of UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication was an important part of activities for establishing a new information order and the first practical results had already been achieved. The programme's principal merit had been to show the possibility of removing many

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