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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE  
14th meeting  
held on  
Friday, 28 October 1983  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia)

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EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 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 and Corr.1 and 2)
- (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. Mr. AL-HASSANI (Kuwait) said that, unless the flow of information was directed towards the dissemination of facts, and not falsehoods the result would undoubtedly be disruptive and thus detrimental to mankind. However, most of the information disseminated currently was imbalanced and wrongly motivated, and there was a monopoly of sources of information. Accordingly, ways must be found to eliminate the imbalance and to establish a new set of standards which would help the media to become more truth-oriented, more an instrument of peace and understanding and thus more constructive in the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order that would be conducive to a new international economic order. To that end, the transfer of technology must be used to help the developing nations to obtain their own communication infrastructures, thereby reducing the predominance of Western news agencies, diversifying sources of information and ensuring a more objective and constructive flow of information.

2. In that connection, he drew attention to the fruitful co-operation established between the Department of Public Information (DPI) and UNESCO, as well as between those two bodies and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and other news agencies in developing countries. In addition, he commended the assistance provided under the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication. All those activities, together with the work of the United Nations information centres, represented a step in the right direction.

3. However, a great deal still remained to be done: the Committee on Information had been entrusted with the task of continuing to examine United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evolution of international relations. It was therefore responsible for evaluating policies and practices in that field. While the recommendations adopted by the Committee on Information would make a major contribution to attaining that goal, extensive efforts and more imaginative methods would still be needed in order to establish a new world information and communication order.

4. He noted with regret that the advancement of technological know-how in the field of information had not been coupled with progress in the quality of the information disseminated. It was currently common practice for truth to be sacrificed for the sake of narrow interests.

5. The countries of the Middle East felt the current inadequacies of the information and communication system more acutely than any other region because of

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(Mr. Al-Hassani, Kuwait)

the insensitivity of the Western mass media, particularly those of the United States, to Arab causes, feelings, aspirations and rights. No world problem had ever been so mishandled or distorted by the American media as the question of Palestine. The biased presentation of facts about the Middle East was one of the underlying causes for the lack of any settlement based on the exercise by the Palestinian people of their inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination, to return to their homes and to establish their own independent State on their national soil.

6. That example showed the way in which biased information could be detrimental to world peace and security, a matter which the United Nations should seek to rectify with all the means at its disposal. DPI should employ its various information vehicles in order to expose Israel's oppressive practices and its expansionist policies in the occupied Arab lands. The measures DPI should take to that end had been spelled out in part II, section D, of the Programme of Action adopted by the recent International Conference on the Question of Palestine (A/38/497, annex).

7. In bringing about a new world information and communication order, which was the ultimate objective of all United Nations activities in that field, considerable caution must be exercised to ensure that the flow of information resulting from the new technology was a blessing, and not a curse. That undertaking represented a particular challenge in view of the discrepancies in the current situation and the gap separating the developed and the developing nations in the field of information. Accordingly, his delegation was awaiting with interest the results of the various studies undertaken on that subject, in particular the study concerning the relationship between the new international economic order and the new world information and communication order, and of the Committee on Information's continued assessment of the policies and activities of DPI.

8. Mr. MIKUS (Hungary) said that the exchange of objective information was particularly necessary at the current time, when attempts were being made to increase confrontation and to upset the military balance. Moreover, those attempts were coupled with widespread propaganda, which undermined understanding and co-operation. For example, when the question of the so-called free flow of information was raised in the Committee, some delegations tried to impose their model. However, the facts showed that theirs was not an ideal model, as was evident in the United States Government's censorship of press coverage of the invasion of Grenada, a question brought up, for instance, by the Washington Post. Clearly, it was important to end the psychological warfare and to use the mass media to strengthen peace and understanding.

9. His Government welcomed the steps taken to promote the establishment of a new world information and communication order which would serve social progress, better relations among countries and peaceful co-operation. The new order should function effectively and should be designed to establish a balanced international exchange of information based on democratic foundations. The new system should take into account the traditions and social system of individual countries and should seek to put an end to the Western information imperialism, which had been rightly censured by the overwhelming majority of the international community.

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(Mr. Mikus, Hungary)

10. Hungary supported the developing countries' just aspiration to establish and strengthen national information centres and it responded to their need for assistance. However, his country could not accept the contrast between the "North" and the "South" or between "developed" and "developing" countries. The countries in the "North" and in the "developed" category included both capitalist and socialist countries, and it was that distinction that was important in the field of information. The socialist countries, too were adversely affected by capitalist propaganda campaigns, in which the political circles that influenced the leading Western news agencies played a major role.

11. In defending the so-called freedom of the press, the Western countries attacked the information policies of the socialist countries. The "absolute" freedom of the press they so vehemently espoused, precisely because of its absoluteness, allowed for the free dissemination of incitement to war, discord and racial hatred and of fascist conceptions, which were prohibited by the Hungarian Constitution. As in the past, Hungary could not accept the time-worn arguments which claimed that "controlled" information was inconsistent with democracy. The question of who controlled information and for what purpose was what was important: the advocates of absolute freedom of the press also "controlled" information in their own countries. In his delegation's opinion, it was significant that a growing number of countries were calling for an end to the Western monopoly as a prerequisite for the democratic dissemination of real information and for the establishment of the new world order.

12. His Government supported the developing countries' efforts to establish their own independent information systems in keeping with their national interests. Those systems would help to promote a free and better-balanced circulation of ideas and information and would help to strengthen peace. However, he stressed that Hungary refused to accept any distinction between the circulation of political information and the circulation of scientific and technical information. It was precisely the Western countries which denied the developing countries and the socialist countries access to information about their scientific and technological achievements.

13. The United Nations had a major role to play in achieving the exchange of more factual and more objective information. In that connection, his delegation attached particular importance to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 37/94 and to improving the work of the Joint United Nations Information Committee and the Committee on Information. It also attached great importance to the 1978 UNESCO Declaration on the contribution of the mass media to strengthening peace and understanding, and agreed that the fifth anniversary of its adoption should be observed. In addition, his delegation believed that the United Nations should disseminate as widely as possible information on the struggle for peace and disarmament, on the world economy, on international information and communication and on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

14. In conclusion, he drew attention to the advisability of implementing the principle of equitable geographical representation within DPI as soon as possible.



15. Mr. AMIN DAUD (Malaysia) drew attention to the communication and information gap between the developed and the developing countries and also to their different perceptions of development and technology. At the Fourth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Algiers in 1973, it had been agreed to enhance the flow of information among developing countries as a fundamental principle of economic self-reliance, an approach echoed by the 1980 UNESCO study on modern communications. However, little progress had been made in ensuring the free circulation and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information in diversifying sources of information and ensuring free access to it or in changing the dependent status of the developing countries in that field.
16. The basic purpose of communication was to transmit reliable and fair information and to promote understanding and progress in a contentious world. To that end, there must be free access to information sources, trained personnel to prepare information, the machinery and systems to transmit it cheaply and the free flow of the information itself. All those factors were related to the perceptions of both the communicator and the recipient.
17. Since information and communication were important to international understanding, to the promotion of social and economic progress and to the maintenance of international peace and security, there must be serious dialogue on the question of the new world information and communication order and on the International Programme for the Development of Communication. Moreover, the existing programmes and recommendations must be implemented, for any delay would merely perpetuate the current situation, which was a legacy of the colonial era.
18. His delegation therefore endorsed the recommendations in the report of the Committee on Information (A/38/21) and supported draft resolution A/SPC/38/L.5, both of which were directed towards fulfilling the basic purpose of communication mentioned earlier.
19. Mr. BENA (Romania) said that the question of information and of the mass media should be dealt with in the light of the fundamental concerns of States and peoples, in particular the need to strengthen international peace and security. That approach was particularly important at a time of international tension, intensification of the policy of force, continued conflict, renewal of the arms race and the constant accumulation of weapons.
20. It was therefore urgent for the mass media to help to improve the international climate and to promote progress towards détente and international co-operation. The media must reflect more frequently and more truthfully the grave dangers inherent in the arms race and the need to adopt nuclear disarmament measures. In addition, they should reflect the abnormal situation evident in the chronic poverty of a large part of the world, as a result of inequitable international relations, and the need to establish a new international economic order with a view to eliminating underdevelopment. Similarly, they should take into account the need to eradicate the last vestiges of colonialism and the policy and practices of racial discrimination and apartheid.



(Mr. Bena, Romania)

21. In accordance with its position on the role of information and the mass media and on the need to establish a new world order in that field, Romania supported the proposal to increase the direct contribution made by the United Nations to international information activities and to the process of establishing the new world order. While encouraging international co-operation and supporting the efforts to create or improve national media systems, the United Nations should devote greater attention to its own information activities and DPI should try to reach as broad a public as possible. In that connection, Romania envisaged the dissemination of information directed towards specific goals, which would help the people of the world to understand the basic concerns of the Organization.

22. Referring to public information activities in connection with the International Youth Year (A/38/21, paras. 76-78), he observed that considerable progress had been made in 1983 in preparing for the Year and in implementing in the recommendations contained in the Specific Programme of Measures and Activities. The dissemination of information on youth would surely be useful, particularly since, at its current session, the General Assembly was to take note of the results of the five regional meetings devoted to the International Youth Year, one of which had been held in Romania.

23. In his delegation's opinion, the results of those meetings and the successful preparation and commemoration of the Year should enjoy publicity, in the true sense of the word. However, to improve information in the field of youth, it was important to organize the information more effectively and to ensure that it reflected the activities already endorsed by the General Assembly in the context of the Year. Accordingly, DPI should take the necessary steps to ensure that questions concerning youth occupied a more important place in the flow of United Nations information. A good example of such an undertaking was the consideration of preparations for the International Youth Year in the context of the annual Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations, which had generated a wealth of suggestions that could be carried out even within existing budgetary restrictions.

24. Youth constituted an important social force which could play a creative role in the innovations of the contemporary world. It was to the international community's advantage to support the training of the younger generation so that its creative potential could be used to serve the ideals of peace, co-operation and progress. In the light of those comments and of the relevant recommendation adopted by the Committee on Information, his delegation hoped that members of the Committee would agree by consensus to continue to include the question of youth among DPI's priorities.

25. In all the information activities, the United Nations information centres had a very useful role to play. However, a number of improvements were necessary, particularly with a view to adapting the centres to national and regional conditions.

26. In conclusion, he stressed that the useful services provided by the United Nations information centre at Bucharest were greatly appreciated.

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27. Mr. LESSIR (Tunisia) said that, since the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had opened the debate in 1970 on the need to integrate the media in the development process, many changes had occurred, despite the prevalence of opposing views on the question. It was gratifying to note that the need for a new world information and communication order was acknowledged to be as critical as the new international economic order.

28. Only by applying the following principles could the dependent status prevailing in both those fields be gradually eliminated: the media should be developed in the service of the integral development of nations; exchanges should be arranged between developing countries and the industrialized world, with no monopolies or exclusivities; and the value system in the field of information should be altered, since the major press agencies, on the pretext of press freedom, dealt with events from their own perspective.

29. Ethics demanded that the major information media must not distort reality in the third-world countries by presenting only what would attract the attention of readers in the developed world. Some of those media ignored the context of a particular event, focused on the negative aspects of a particular system, or covered only certain events such as coups d'état, disasters and sensational stories.

30. The developing countries were endeavouring to alter the imbalance which arose from the one-way flow of Western ideas, by playing their rightful role in the field of information. The Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, currently headed by the Tunisian agency Tunis Afrique Presse, had been established to meet the concerns of those countries. It was an outgrowth of the 1978 UNESCO Declaration, and its ultimate objective was to ensure, through co-operation and co-ordination at the professional level, the flow of balanced, objective and accurate information with a view to promoting understanding and co-operation among the non-aligned countries, affirming their national cultural identities, publicizing their legitimate aspirations to freedom, independence and economic and social development and eliminating the vestiges of colonialism in all its forms. The Pool would seek to introduce a new, balanced and more objective approach to news without becoming involved in a confrontation with existing information systems.

31. He underscored the close link between information and development, since information was an important means of persuasion. Mastering the techniques of information would entail broadening one's horizons and benefiting from the advantages of learning and adopting the means available to others. The Pool included 84 press agencies and a number of government radio stations and information organs. A keen sense of solidarity had emerged among the press agencies participating in the Pool, a fact which had enabled the more developed agencies to provide material and staff assistance to those which were less well equipped. That was a significant example of South-South co-operation which would permit more balanced North-South co-operation.

32. As indicated in section III of the Secretary-General's report (A/38/387), fruitful co-operation had been established between the Pool and DPI, particularly, for the establishment of an electronic link for the redissemination of news dispatches, and for the training of correspondents from non-aligned countries. He



(Mr. Lessir, Tunisia)

hoped that the United Nations would make optimum use of the information received from the Pool and that it would give full encouragement to the Pool for the purpose of promoting its effective contribution to the establishment of a new world information order.

33. Rapid advances in the communication sector, particularly in the use of satellites and computers, threatened to widen the gap even further between developed and developing countries and, indeed, also created imbalances between countries of the North. As a first step to rectify the problem, he urged the developing countries to promote co-operation with the International Programme for the Development of Communication and DPI, as well as among their own information media. He drew attention in that connection to the conference scheduled to be held in Jakarta in January 1984 on communication tariffs among the developing countries.

34. Notwithstanding all the attainments of the United Nations over the years in the fields of decolonization, economic and social development, codification in various fields, international law and other aspects of international relations, certain media persisted in tarnishing the image of, and bitterly criticizing, the Organization. It must take steps to stem that malevolent tide in order to preserve itself. At the recent session of the Committee on Information, his delegation had proposed that the United Nations should arrange for daily short-wave broadcasts of its activities as a way of correcting negative perceptions of the Organization. Resources had prevented that recommendation from being adopted. He hoped that the United Nations information centres would take over that task before the problem became worse. He offered a number of examples of distorted press reports of the United Nations, its methods of work and of its activities.

35. The recommendations submitted by the Committee on Information to the General Assembly fell into three categories: the first presented no problem; the second, although entailing financial implications, should be adopted, given their importance; and he expressed the hope that delegations which had objected to the third category for political reasons were now better disposed towards their adoption.

36. Mr. TAHINDRO (Madagascar) said that the quantitative and qualitative growth of information media as well as the drastic alteration of the international political landscape which had followed decolonization, the emergence of new States and differing problems and aspirations emphasized the critical role which those media would play henceforth. Because the media were at the centre of East-West ideological conflicts, as well as of North-South economic antagonism, they must be enabled to play a mediating role in a heterogeneous world.

37. A step in that direction had been the adoption by UNESCO of the Declaration on the Establishment of a New World Information and Communication Order. That order was clearly based on the principles of international law enshrined in the Charter.

38. With a view to implementing the new information order, it was necessary to consider the possibility of viewing information as a fundamental human right as well as a collective right of peoples. Furthermore, encouragement should be given



(Mr. Tahindro, Madagascar)

to the elaboration and implementation of national information policies which were integrated with general development objectives. In the framework of economic and technical co-operation among developing countries, information exchanges among those countries should be increased, with a view to counteracting the often fallacious or distorted information emanating from certain press organs in the developed countries and to decreasing the dependence of the developing countries in information matters. The establishment of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and the Pan-African News Agency were positive steps. His delegation also welcomed the fact that the Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa had decided to carry out an experimental project on the exchange of news by satellite in Africa.

39. The obstacles to the establishment of the new world information order were political and economic in nature. Political decolonization notwithstanding, many mass media of developed countries still viewed the third world from the perspective of their own society's concepts and values. They tended to place excessive emphasis on the negative and sensational aspects of news in the developing countries, to the detriment of other, more tangible information from those countries. Moreover, the fact that most of those media were owned by private firms meant that they followed the law of supply and demand, which dictated that sensational stories would sell better than the well-balanced news reports.

40. The weaker capacities of many developing countries in the economic, financial and technological spheres also hampered the rapid implementation of the new world information order and perpetuated the current imbalances affecting the gathering, production and transmission of information. Their media could hardly rival the private information monopolies of the developed countries, since the task of ensuring the quantitative and qualitative improvement of their information media was but one of many development priorities. It was thus obvious that the concept of a new information order was an intrinsic part of a new international economic order.

41. Turning to the features which should characterize the new information order, he said that the current owners of information media needed to alter their attitude and their political approach, and increased assistance should be provided to enable the developing countries to strengthen their information capacities. The international community should also consider the possibility of elaborating a universal convention containing a code for communication professionals based both on their freedom to inform and their responsibility as providers of information.

42. Within the United Nations, certain guiding principles laid down by the Joint United Nations Information Committee in 1980 should be remembered, namely, that support should be given to the establishment of information organs in the developing countries, particularly at the local level, through the training of information staff and through assistance to developing countries in disseminating their culture and development efforts; information links should be evolved among the developing countries through the establishment of South-South press and broadcast agency networks; and assistance should be provided to the developing countries to permit them to publicize their views and development requirements through the more balanced dissemination of information among developed and developing countries.

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(Mr. Tahindro, Madagascar)

43. The United Nations must be given the means to carry out those objectives, particularly with regard to General Assembly resolution 35/201. To that end, the operational capacities of DPI should be strengthened and the United Nations might consider acquiring its own communication satellite.

44. At the national level, the developing countries should consider strengthening their information and communication infrastructure as an integral part of their national planning and their global development strategy.

45. He welcomed the steps taken by DPI towards the establishment of a new world information order, in particular through the training of journalists from developing countries, the strengthening of United Nations information centres, the organization of such projects as the United Nations/UNESCO round table on the new world information and communication order held at Innsbruck in September 1983 and the establishment of a coherent broadcasting policy vis-à-vis the developing countries. His delegation would continue to support the Department's efforts.

46. Mr. JESUS (Cape Verde) stressed that the need for a new world-wide information and communication relationship was particularly urgent at the current time, when a massive propaganda campaign was being waged against détente and peace. Instead of using advanced technology and the dissemination of information to achieve international co-operation and develop friendly relations among nations, those who possessed that technology had been generating distrust between nations having different ideologies and social systems. They had been selfishly manipulating public opinion so as to create a psychological climate in which the arms build-up was presented as legitimate deterrence and intervention as a legitimate way of protecting their so-called vital interests.

47. Obviously, such a dangerous threat must be corrected in order to avoid a global catastrophe and to build a better world in which the developed and the developing countries could live together in peace. To that end, the efforts to eliminate the dependence of the developing countries must be strengthened and, in that regard, his delegation commended the tireless work of UNESCO in helping to narrow the gap between the developing and the developed countries in the field of information and communication. By the same token, he welcomed the progress made by the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and the useful co-operation established between the Pool and DPI.

48. While regretting that the Committee on Information had been unable to achieve consensus on all the proposals discussed at its latest session, his delegation fully supported its recommendations and called for their prompt implementation. His delegation was particularly interested in recommendation 26 (A/38/21, p. 26), which referred to programming in the Portuguese language and which responded to the legitimate needs of the inhabitants of the Portuguese-speaking African countries. His delegation appreciated the efforts DPI had made to improve the programming for those countries, but, as his delegation had already stressed, the short-wave broadcasts in Portuguese were of little or no use because they were transmitted when the inhabitants of five of those countries were asleep. He therefore again suggested that that programming, which had a significant impact on the people in those countries, should be broadcast at a more reasonable time, and he pledged his delegation's co-operation in achieving a satisfactory solution in that regard.

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49. Mr. WASIUDDIN (Bangladesh) said that his delegation agreed that it was urgent to establish a new communication order and also agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information that the crucial role for DPI lay in its efforts to widen public support and understanding for the United Nations and the international community. His delegation appreciated the very effective manner in which the Under-Secretary-General had been guiding the activities of DPI for that purpose.

50. To downplay the importance of the debate on the new world information and communication order would have negative consequence on relations among nations. The free and balanced flow of information among nations facilitated international dialogue and understanding, which were of crucial importance to the promotion of global solidarity and co-operation. The climate of international relations and the degree of mutual trust among nations depended greatly on the extent of free and balanced dissemination of information.

51. Because the developing countries lagged far behind the developed countries in the field of information and communication for historical reasons, there was an imbalance in news flows, giving rise to serious defects in global communication patterns. It was thus imperative to establish the new world information and communication order, the most important elements of which were the free circulation of information, the guaranteed diversity of sources of information, a greater balance in the dissemination of information, and a change in the dependent status of the developing countries in the information field to one of equality. The establishment of the new order, by correcting imbalances, would not only help the developing countries attain their due position, but would also clearly be in the interest of the developed countries.

52. Given the relevance of information and communication to economic development, he reiterated his delegation's strong conviction that the establishment of the new world information and communication order was essential for the establishment of a new international economic order. The Non-Aligned Movement in particular had made very significant contributions to increased international co-operation in the information field.

53. The United Nations had a special responsibility, and the growing complexity of the world had made its role in fostering international co-operation more complicated and arduous. The United Nations should therefore place greater emphasis on the dissemination of information about its own objectives and areas of activity, particularly the economic and social fields. With the aim of promoting the new world order, DPI must undertake wider and more complex activities. The remarkable activities and achievements of the United Nations in the socio-economic development of the developing countries deserved wider and more imaginative publicity, with a view to improving the Organization's public image and enhancing understanding of its relevance. As the focal point of public information activities of the United Nations, DPI faced a formidable task; he looked forward to a report on its efforts in that direction.

54. Turning to the Secretary-General's report (A/38/387 and Add.1) on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information, he expressed the hope that steps could be taken to implement all the recommendations fully and without delay.



(Mr. Wasiuddin, Bangladesh)

55. The developing countries deeply regretted that, despite the great flexibility shown by the Group of 77, of which his delegation had been the spokesman, it had not been possible to achieve a consensus on a number of very important issues discussed at the most recent session of that Committee. That might set a very bad precedent. In the areas where consensus had been reached, many of the recommendations had fallen far short of expectations. Among the many agreed recommendations, his delegation attached particular importance to those aimed at the early establishment of the new world information and communication order, those dealing with close co-operation among the United Nations, UNESCO, DPI and UNDP, and those relating to equitable geographical distribution and linguistic balance in DPI and the introduction of radio programmes in various regional languages. His delegation hoped that it would be possible for the General Assembly to authorize appropriate action on those recommendations on which a consensus had not been reached in the Committee on financial or other grounds.

56. His delegation welcomed the Innsbruck round table on a new world information and communication order and drew attention to the important impetus provided for the establishment of a new world order by the 1983 Jakarta Declaration on the flow of information among South Asian countries. Such efforts would contribute substantially towards attaining the common goal.

57. Mr. JUWANA (Indonesia) said it was regrettable that progress in establishing the new world information and communication order had been very slow and arduous. The main problems were the different interpretations of the conceptual aspects of the new order and measures to be taken by the international community for its implementation. His delegation stressed the need to work together in elaborating principles which would prevent abuse of the great potential of the information media.

58. His delegation noted with satisfaction the discussion which had taken place at the Innsbruck round table. His Government supported such endeavours and urged that similar meetings should be convened in the future to further elaborate the principles of the new order. The documents used at those meetings should be made widely available, particularly to Member States and to organizations in the information and communication field.

59. The Committee on Information should make every effort to achieve tangible results in carrying out its mandate with regard to the establishment of the new order. It was most regrettable that the consideration of that question had thus far been primarily polemical.

60. It was gratifying to note from the Secretary-General's report (A/38/387 and Add.1) that a number of recommendations had been implemented in spite of limited resources. He specifically welcomed the production by the Asian Unit of the Radio Service of a taped monthly quarter-hour programme in Indonesian, and hoped that the change-over to a weekly format could be made as soon as possible.



(Mr. Juwana, Indonesia)

61. With regard to the latest recommendations of the Committee on Information (A/38/21, para. 94), he expressed the hope that recommendation B.3 concerning the reopening of the United National Information Centre in Jakarta would be promptly implemented. A country with a population of over 150 million, Indonesia required the services of such a centre to provide timely and accurate information to its people on United Nations activities. In that regard, it should be noted that the only United Nations information centres in South-East Asia were in Bangkok and Manila. Their operations did not cover his country.

62. It was gratifying to note the efforts of the Director-General of UNESCO to implement the General Assembly's recommendations, particularly those concerning the establishment of a new world information and communication order. He had helped to solve practical problems in that field and his efforts should be strongly supported. In view of the difficulty in implementing those recommendations because of lack of financial resources, he joined in the appeal by early speakers that the advanced countries and relevant international organizations should provide more substantial voluntary assistance.

63. Lastly, he pointed out that his Government's commitment to the establishment of the new order was matched by practical measures. Accordingly, his Government had decided to host the conference of ministers of information of non-aligned countries in Jakarta in January 1984. The conference would, inter alia, explore ways and means to promote the new information order.

64. Mr. RANGEL (Venezuela) said that the deterioration of the image of the United Nations was due largely to the lack of co-operation on the part of Member States - particularly those which had a monopoly of the mass media - in publicizing the achievements of the Organization. In that connection, it was hoped that the recommendations of the Committee on Information, particularly recommendations 5 and 6, would be implemented speedily in close co-operation with DPI.

65. Venezuela was profoundly committed to freedom of expression, which was indispensable to the existence of its democratic system. His Government strongly supported the efforts to establish a new world information and communication order to bring about greater international understanding and strengthen international peace and security. The monopoly held by certain developed countries in the information field seriously limited the access of developing countries to sources of information and impeded efforts to achieve greater control over the communication media. The one-way flow of information threatened to inundate developing countries with information which did not take account of their political, economic, social and cultural problems. Greater political will was required to promote co-operation between those who controlled the information media and those who were its victims. Furthermore, the communication policies of those who monopolized information should be based on the principles of objectivity and impartiality.

66. It was a cause for concern that the technological advances in the information and communication field, which favoured a small group of countries, had made national frontiers, particularly those of developing countries, increasingly

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(Mr. Rangel, Venezuela)

penetrable and had furthered weakened the concept of the sovereignty of States. That situation should be given thorough consideration, since the social and moral values of many societies were seriously threatened by the penetration of foreign modes of thought and behaviour. Venezuela was firmly opposed to the monopolization of the information media by Governments and transnational corporations and condemned the arbitrary use of the information media in order to manipulate opinion. His delegation firmly supported the sovereign right of developing countries to inform the world and each other about themselves, in order to overcome the imbalance in the field of information. Measures must be taken to put an end to the recolonization of the developing world, in which the information media were used as a weapon by the transnational corporations, with the complicity of certain highly industrialized States.

67. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the work of DPI. It was hoped that the efforts to avoid duplication and make more rational use of DPI resources would continue. In that regard, the strengthening of the United Nations information centres and improved co-operation between the centres and Member States were of vital importance. The future work of the Department should be focused, as a matter of priority, on the establishment of a new international economic order, disarmament, the struggle against apartheid, support for the independence of Namibia, the denunciation of violations of human rights wherever they occurred, and the economic and social development of the third world.

68. It was gratifying to note that UNESCO, through its International Programme for the Development of Communication, was helping to democratize information. His country would continue to support the Programme in the firm belief that such initiatives promoted the establishment of the new world information and communication order and helped to rectify the unjust distribution of the communication media between developed and developing countries. He urged all States able to do so, particularly developed countries, to contribute the resources required by the Programme.

69. It was unfortunate that the achievements of the World Communication Year had thus far been limited and that the establishment of the new world order was far from being a reality. Nevertheless, Venezuela, together with other Latin American countries, had contributed to strengthening the information media in the region and to eliminating the imbalances in that field. In that connection, he pointed out that the Latin American Special Information Services Agency, which promoted regional co-operation in Latin America in the field of communication, had been established in Mexico. It was hoped that that would encourage other developing regions to establish similar agencies in accordance with the objectives of the new world order and with the need to strengthen international peace and security.

70. Mr. MASRI (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the new world information and communication order would complement the new international economic order in redressing the imbalance of relations between North and South. Colonialist domination had imposed restrictions on the economic, scientific and cultural growth of three quarters of mankind and had exploited its natural and human resources for the sake of Western civilization and Western development. The continuing concentration of power, financial resources, expertise and technology in the North constituted the main obstacle to the development of sound international relations.

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(Mr. Masri, Syrian Arab Republic)

71. The new international economic order and the new world information and communication order were a natural historical development. The failure of the North-South dialogue had brought about new patterns of South-South co-operation. The United Nations would have to play a more active role in the development of the third-world countries and in updating their information media, in spite of the fact that the wealthy industrialized countries withheld their assessed contributions or threatened to do so whenever their interests so required.

72. Such a situation did not augur well, and had had repercussions on the work of the Committee on Information and of DPI itself. The Committee on Information had been unable to reach consensus on certain important questions, including the request to DPI to cover adequately Israeli policies and practices affecting human rights in the occupied Arab territories. Furthermore, it had not been possible to implement certain previous recommendations, such as that for strengthening the DPI Middle East Unit, while certain other recommendations, such as that for strengthening co-operation between DPI and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, had been implemented only to a limited extent. There lay behind all of those difficulties the political will of the powerful to obstruct any development in United Nations information activities which might constitute a threat to the information monopoly enjoyed by the Western news media and the role played by them in conveying distorted information to world public opinion in developing and developed countries alike.

73. The choice of practical alternatives to that monopoly was difficult but could not be avoided if a new world information and communication order was to be established. Many ideas had been advanced, such as the strengthening of co-operation between DPI and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, as well as with the regional news agencies of developing countries, and the strengthening of co-operation and the exchange of expertise, training and materials among those countries. The strengthening of South-South co-operation in the information field was imperative because of the feeling of despair that had followed the failure of the North-South dialogue and the insistence of the North on maintaining the unidirectional flow of information towards the South.

74. DPI must co-ordinate, organize and encourage co-operation, the exchange of information and the development of media technology. To enable the Department to undertake that important task, it must be restructured so as to be more responsive to the needs and requirements of the new world order. Its first priority must be to give the developing world an appropriate place in United Nations decision-making on information activities. To do so, the information services should be regionalized so that the various units would be capable of operating, in a manner in keeping with the interests of their regions, within the framework of an information policy formulated and supervised by a council in which all the geographical regions were represented. In the Committee on Information, his delegation had made proposals along those lines, in implementation of General Assembly resolution 35/201. However, they had met strong opposition from a small number of representatives, which had prevented their adoption by consensus. The restructuring of DPI had become imperative and was in conformity with the Secretary-General's plan for administrative reform in the Organization.

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75. Mr. HANSEL (German Democratic Republic) stressed the overriding importance of the 1978 UNESCO Declaration on the mass media at a time when peaceful co-operation was threatened as never before by a policy based on the arms race and confrontation. The political and moral responsibilities of the mass media seemed to be greater than at any other time in the discussion of questions relating to information. The mass media created an intellectual climate which could promote or impede the quest for peace, which was closely linked to the aspiration of peoples throughout the world to solve their economic and social problems.

76. In their Political Declaration made earlier in 1983, the States Parties to the Warsaw Treaty had stressed the need for an atmosphere of confidence in relations among States on the basis of the dissemination of true information and the renunciation of great-Power aspirations, in addition to the adoption of corresponding measures in the economic and military spheres. The principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter must also be observed by the mass media with respect to the content of information, the exchange of information among States and peoples, the promotion of international co-operation in the information and communication field, and the protection of the sovereign rights of States.

77. United Nations responsibility for international peace and security was closely linked to the Organization's role in establishing a new world information and communication order. Support for UNESCO in elaborating the relevant principles and for closer collaboration between the United Nations and UNESCO was particularly important. His delegation favoured renewal of the mandate of the Committee on Information and supported that Committee's recommendations. Further efforts should be made to have the consensus reached in that Committee reflected in the draft resolution to be submitted. That applied, inter alia, to recognition of the principle of the sovereign equality of all participants in the exchange of information and to the role of information and communication in enabling all persons to contribute to the political, economic, social and cultural life of society.

78. With respect to the World Disarmament Campaign, he pointed out that the mass media of the German Democratic Republic had always been committed to the task of disarmament. At the same time, the mass media and public opinion in his country vehemently rejected any abuse of the means of mass communication to assist preparations for war. In the light of the dangerous situation in Central America and the armed intervention by the United States in Grenada, the objectives behind the establishment of Radio Martí in the United States were quite obvious. Broadcasting stations like Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which pursued subversive aims, impeded the development of normal international relations in the field of information. Seeking to conduct psychological warfare and increase confrontation, those broadcasting stations were in violation of the provisions of the Charter and of relevant General Assembly resolutions. His delegation fully agreed with the statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information concerning the relationship between the need for a new world information and communication order and the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



(Mr. Hansel, German  
Democratic Republic)

79. He noted with satisfaction the activities of DPI, particularly the work done in accordance with the priorities set forth in General Assembly resolutions 35/201 and 37/94, which stressed the need for peace, international security and disarmament. The Department's future activities should continue to be based on General Assembly resolutions. His country would continue to co-operate with DPI in that regard.

80. The efforts to democratize international relations in the field of information and communications under United Nations auspices should be supported. It was hoped that the policy of aggravating international relations and opposing all progressive trends in the world would not affect that work. International relations in the information field must be guided by the principles of the Charter and by international norms applicable to the exchange of information. The propagation of doctrines based on the "legitimacy" of a nuclear first strike, the "admissibility" of a nuclear war, and the "possibility" of winning a nuclear war must be declared a grave crime against humanity and should be condemned accordingly. The foremost task of the Organization was to mobilize efforts throughout the world to bring about peace.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.