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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia)

later: Mr. STARČEVIĆ (Yugoslavia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 72: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.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. Mr. CHAN (Singapore) said that since the Committee had begun consideration of that agenda item, it had always worked on the basis of consensus in dealing with the question of public information; it was hoped that that tradition would continue. However, both at recent meetings and during the substantive session in the summer, the discussions had increasingly touched on budgetary matters, which generally gave rise to differences of opinion. That tendency seriously affected the consideration of that question by the General Assembly.

2. Although the Committee had before it two important reports, the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/38/387 and Add.1) and the report of the round table held in Innsbruck (A/AC.198/70), he feared that the attention of the Committee would focus on negotiations concerning DPI projects. The question of financing had become a symbolic dividing line between developing and developed countries. In his opinion, the reservations of the developed countries concerning the United Nations budget might be due to the fact that the contributor countries felt that the proposed programmes were excessive or were part of a "laundry list" which demonstrated the profligacy of the developing countries. If it was only a question of limiting an uncontrollable budget, his delegation would be in favour of that. No Government could object to the criterion of fiscal responsibility. Nevertheless, from the point of view of a requesting country, the programme asked for might be particularly important and perhaps might not require a large amount of funds. On the other hand, if all the new programmes were considered together, they would perhaps require considerable resources, in which case it would be difficult to decide which programmes should be eliminated. For that reason, he proposed the establishment of an advisory committee made up of the members of the Committee on Information, which, together with the Under-Secretary-General, could review existing programmes and initiate new ones on an annual basis. The members of that small group would have a better understanding of the functioning of DPI, would consult with the Department and the delegations concerned, and would recommend to the Committee on Information the implementation or initiation of new programmes.

3. He fully agreed with the comment made by the representative of Denmark at the 13th meeting (A/SPC/38/SR.13) that the work of providing information on the United Nations in the industrialized countries should not be neglected, so that the tendency to curb public expenditures, including development assistance, would thus be counterbalanced. He also drew attention to the view expressed by a former

(Mr. Chan, Singapore)

official of the United States Government, who had attributed the failure in launching global economic negotiations to the inability to rally public support in the United States, which would have had a positive effect on policy-makers. The importance of the programmes for developing countries, where, in many cases, the efforts of DPI were often the only source of information about the United Nations, should also be stressed.

4. How to ensure wider and more evenly spread sources of information was another problem. Journalists perceived as newsworthy sensational items, which at times constituted only a small part of the overall picture. There was a difference in the perception of the purpose of news by national Governments, which considered news an element of information within the process of development, and by journalists, who sought to convince the public of the importance of the information which they transmitted. That difference of opinion was even more pronounced in the developing countries, which had other concerns besides freedom of the press. Although they feared the loss of freedom, they were also alarmed that the only news concerning them which reached the Western world were reports of crises, destruction and wrongdoing.

5. With regard to the report on the Innsbruck round table (A/AC.198/70), DPI and UNESCO should be commended for organizing that meeting. The discussions in Innsbruck had shown that what was needed was more discussion, more information and more communication on the proposed new world order, and for that reason, his delegation was opposed to any effort to obstruct the debate or restrict it to a single forum.

6. The question of information technology was a timely and relevant issue which affected the countries of the North and the South, as well as those of the East and the West. It was the responsibility of UNESCO to transmit available information on the impact of that new revolution on mankind.

7. Mr. CAPPAGLI (Argentina) said that one of the characteristics of the contemporary world was the revolution in the information and communication media, which affected the daily lives of all persons and all States. Although people had become aware of the power of the communications media in recent years, it was necessary to participate in the changes which were occurring in order to prevent the media from controlling man.

8. Argentina actively participated in the elaboration of the guidelines which the Committee on Information was preparing on that item and attached particular importance to the new world information and communication order, the establishment of which was essential in order to change the current dependent status of developing countries in that field.

9. He stressed the importance which his delegation attached to General Assembly resolution 37/92, which was designed to contribute to the task of promoting the free dissemination and mutual exchange of information. He also expressed his delegation's concern at the allocation of resources earmarked for DPI and, in that regard, drew attention to the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolution 35/201.

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(Mr. Cappagli, Argentina)

10. The acquisition of a United Nations communications satellite was a question of great importance, for technical and economic reasons. It was regrettable, therefore, that the interim report contained in document A/SPC/38/L.3 was the only indication of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 37/94, in spite of the fact that, during the substantive session held in July 1983, it had been announced that the final report would be finished in time for consideration by the General Assembly. He stressed his delegation's surprise at that procedure. Without wishing to call into question the objectivity of the consultants, he said that that procedure gave rise to doubts concerning their effectiveness and pointed out that the description of the study had not taken due account of the savings which the satellite would bring about. It was hoped that the Committee on Information would complete the final paper on that item at the next substantive session.

11. The question of co-operation between DPI and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies was another issue of interest to his country. He expressed the hope that that relationship would be strengthened and that a direct electronic keyboard link between United Nations Headquarters and the Pool would be established. He also stressed the importance of the seminars organized in co-operation with UNESCO on the promotion of the new world information and communication order and the international Mass Media Leaders' Roundtables.

12. It was unfortunate that at its last session, held between 20 June and 8 July 1983, the Committee on Information had been unable to reach a consensus on all its recommendations, and he hoped that that problem would not recur. It was also regrettable that it had not been possible to incorporate the recommendations of the Group of 77.

13. Mr. DENIGER (Canada) said that Canada was very conscious of the problems faced by all countries, particularly the developing countries, in the field of communications. It was convinced that, in the development of a nation, the communications infrastructure was just as important as the information that flowed through it from both domestic and external sources and, accordingly, it recognized the need to close the communications gap between the developed and the developing countries. Canada's experience had shown that a modern communications system was one of the cornerstones of economic, social and cultural development and that communications were linked to the development of nationhood, a notion which had been a core issue in discussions on a new world information and communication order.

14. In various multilateral forums, including the United Nations and UNESCO, Canada had shown that it understood the importance the developing countries attached to the problem of the current imbalance in the flow of information. While seeking solutions to redress that imbalance, Canada remained firmly committed to the principle of the freest possible flow of information, with respect for the sovereign rights of States.

15. Those Governments which believed that communication could be restricted to their national borders should take into account the fact that the web of

(Mr. Deniger, Canada)

telecommunications facilities transcended national boundaries and had become an everyday reality. It was generally accepted that, within the next few years, economic growth would be increasingly bound up with access to information.

16. With so much essential information flowing across borders, it could be said that Governments which blocked that flow did so at their own risk. No doubt, truly democratic Governments had a legitimate regulatory role to play in deciding what means of transmission were used. However, a cardinal principle of Western democracies was that Governments must not control the content of what was transmitted. A basic distinction must be made between the means and the content. Nevertheless, Governments were responsible for ensuring that appropriate communications facilities were used, in order to guarantee economic and cultural vitality.

17. Furthermore, Canada was convinced of the importance and necessity of the free development of international public opinion, because it believed that that could have a direct impact on the efficiency of the United Nations. Indeed, a more effective dissemination of information and a greater diversification of sources would support the Secretary-General's effort to strengthen the work and activities of the Organization. Canada also endorsed the efforts of the Department of Public Information to improve the public's understanding of the role and importance of the United Nations.

18. Canada wished to reaffirm once again that any change to improve the imbalance in the flow of information must take into account the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations, as had been indicated in resolution 4/19 adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its twenty-first session. A fundamental principle to be borne in mind was that Governments must refrain from interfering with the press. Canada believed that the abolition of censorship and free access to information for journalists constituted basic principles in the development and protection of human rights.

19. In addition, Canada considered the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication to be an important step in the process of establishing a new world information and communication order. However, it should be remembered that resources were limited, and it was important to ensure that those resources were used in the most effective way possible. Canada, which had been elected to the Programme's first Intergovernmental Council, had contributed \$250,000 to its special fund and remained interested in the work of the Programme.

20. Mr. KI (Upper Volta) said that information was an essential and constant need of human society as a whole. Accordingly, it could be a powerful element of understanding, peace and security between nations or the cause of discord, distrust and war between peoples. Currently, the most important problem was the imbalance in the flow of information between the North and the South. The imbalance resulted from the fact that two thirds of the news media were in the hands of the large agencies in the developed countries. The revolution in the field of communications technology did not foreshadow any more equitable flow in future and, each day, the developing countries were subjected to cultural aggression, which coloured their view of the world.

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(Mr. Ki, Upper Volta)

21. In his delegation's opinion, the flow of information must serve the cause of understanding between peoples and nations. The developing countries were struggling to overcome their cultural and economic underdevelopment and to have the right to a decent standard of living. Their aspirations must be accurately reflected and their cultures presented with due dignity.

22. Upper Volta was in favour of the free flow of information. However, it understood those who believed that they could not allow the transmission in their territory of information whose objectives and impartiality left a great deal to be desired or which constituted cultural aggression against their people. Upper Volta supported the efforts directed towards the establishment of a new world information order but, to that end, there must be a willingness to engage in international co-operation. Only co-operation among the developing countries could restore some degree of balance in the flow of information. The Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and the Pan-African News Agency must be strengthened, since it was obvious that the new world information order could be achieved only through the will and determination of the developing countries.

23. For those countries and, in particular, for Upper Volta, the new world information and communication order had very real meaning. It was necessary to have not only more objective information but also a better distribution of the instruments of information and communication at both the national and international levels. The inequality of information existed not only between the North and the South. At the national level, there were major disparities within the population, and the concept of the democratization of communication must be stressed. In a rural country such as Upper Volta, a large part of the population had no access to schools. Consequently, there was no access to printed information. Upper Volta had decided to remedy that problem through a reform of education, which should help to raise the literacy rate substantially, and through an adult literacy programme conducted in the national languages.

24. At a later stage, it would become necessary to master information technology. Therefore, the training of technical personnel was an important objective, and his delegation took note of the decision adopted by the United Nations and by UNESCO to implement specific measures in that area.

25. Lastly, although the problem of infrastructures was of constant concern, there were major budgetary limitations in that regard. For that reason, his delegation firmly supported the recommendations made by the Committee on Information, in particular those contained in paragraphs 13, 14 and 15 on pages 23 and 24 of document A/38/21.

26. By the same token, Upper Volta attached great importance to the role played by the United Nations information centres and supported the Committee on Information's recommendation that they should be strengthened. In particular, he expressed the hope that they would be given every possible means so as to be able not only to fulfil their functions in the countries where they were located but also adequately to serve the other countries under their jurisdiction.

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27. Mr. BENCHEKROUN (Morocco) observed that, in every situation, particularly those in which human rivalry, economic and financial interests and political, social and cultural considerations entered into play, divergence was more prevalent than any analytical approach. Questions relating to information and communication were no exception. Had it not been for the good will, patience and spirit of compromise displayed by some members of the Committee, no progress could have been made on the item under consideration. Resistance to changing the old information order frequently stemmed from those intellectual strongholds which considered themselves to be the guardians of political, economic, social and cultural orthodoxy and which tried discreetly to direct or manipulate public opinion in their own countries and, ultimately, in the countries of the third world, as well.

28. The new world information order was the essential corollary of the new world economic order. The only way to reduce the gap between the developed and the developing countries was through co-operation, and such co-operation must prevail in the field of information, also. In that connection, he drew attention to the round tables, organized jointly by the United Nations and UNESCO, on the question of the establishment of a new world information and communication order. Distinguished figures of all schools of thought had participated in the round tables, and considerable progress had been made.

29. The generally positive evolution with regard to the world information and communication order had been illustrated by the statement by the representative of Greece, who had spoken on behalf of the European Economic Community. The statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, whose report demonstrated the dedicated work carried out by DPI, the activities of which were so essential to the United Nations, should also be emphasized. Nevertheless, there was one aspect of the statement by Mr. Akashi at the 10th meeting of the Committee (A/SPC/38/SR.10) which aroused concern on the part of his delegation. Mr. Akashi had said that the United Nations information centres had been asked to make a contribution to strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat in assisting the Secretary-General to perform his role in preventive diplomacy.

30. Many questions should be raised with regard to that new function assigned to the information centres, which, in the view of his delegation, had never been provided for in the statutes of the centres and did not appear in the recommendations of the Committee on Information. He requested the Under-Secretary-General to clarify whether that did not entail a risk of confusion between the dissemination and gathering of information and whether there was also not the danger of going beyond the competence of the information centres, which could only have negative consequences for the functioning of those centres.

31. The information centres carried out the task of informing the public opinion of countries, sometimes under difficult circumstances. Those centres, at least in developing countries, had achieved a certain amount of success in their mission since the local population and even Governments seemed to be receptive to their activities. It should be asked, however, whether the same situation obtained in developed countries. Without going into detail, he wished to point out that sometimes the United Nations was discredited and a certain hostility towards the

(Mr. Benchekroun, Morocco)

Organization demonstrated to the public opinion of those countries. A special effort should be carried out with regard to the industrialized nations, and a dialogue should be maintained with them. He supported the view expressed by the representative of Greece, speaking on behalf of the European Economic Community, that a good deal of the information transmitted by the United Nations should be directed towards the public in countries which were potential contributors. It should be recognized that the greatest contributions came from the Western countries. He hoped that the Under-Secretary-General would be able to clarify those points, since the Committee was guided only by the desire to promote the efficiency of DPI.

32. Lastly, he referred to the different pressures which were placed on DPI. Those pressures constituted a natural and often inevitable phenomenon. In that regard, his delegation supported the conclusions reached by the Under-Secretary-General and contained in document A/AC.198/1983/CRP.4 of 24 June 1983.

33. Mr. OULD DADDAH (Mauritania) said that, where necessary, the international community should transcend the sterile polemics and ideological confrontation which might arise in other forums, and support the establishment of a new world information and communication order. The free flow of information, its unimpeded dissemination and access to it represented a fundamental element of great importance for understanding and human progress in the legitimate search for peace and security. Nevertheless, the unfortunate consequences of the frequent use of a false freedom of information to carry out real acts of aggression of all types against peoples, particularly those in developing countries, should be stressed. Those cynical manoeuvres were a source of suffering, disorganization and backwardness for the communities and human groups affected, among which an attempt was being made to introduce life-styles, habits and, sometimes, development models which were alien to their ethic, the preservation of their identity and their economic interests.

34. Aware of the gravity of the danger which such distortions and manipulation of freedom of information represented for peoples, his delegation remained convinced that it was necessary to preserve unimpaired that free flow and dissemination of information which constituted a factor of progress for mankind and should be considered one of the fundamental human rights. In that regard, the exchange of information should represent a multidirectional current through which each country and each cultural area should be enabled to receive and transmit information. It was, therefore, essential to correct the existing inequities in the information media. The establishment of a new world information and communication order was incompatible with the fact that a small number of news agencies from the industrialized countries exercised a de facto monopoly and controlled 90 per cent of the information disseminated. That situation posed a danger to developing countries and all those who were engaged in a liberation struggle which was often directed against the colonialism and imperialism of those who possessed a formidable weapon in the form of the monopoly on the dissemination of information. Furthermore, the danger of that monopoly could, and indeed did, manifest itself in other distortions under the pretext of freedom of the press and freedom of information. The peoples of the developing countries were being subjected to a

(Mr. Ould Daddah, Mauritania)

veritable cultural colonialism; the manipulation of freedom of information had taken the form of provoking violence, encouraging flagrant acts of aggression, justifying those acts and attempting to give a respectable appearance to those who perpetrated grave offences against dignity and human rights. Those practices were currently being carried out in southern Africa and the usurped land of Palestine.

35. That situation was all the more negative since, under the impulse of colonialism and imperialism, it continued to contribute to a large degree to the fact that the peoples of Africa and Asia were still not aware of the need to have recourse to their own resources, develop them and use them in the best possible way in order to satisfy their basic needs. It was hoped that those who currently controlled the information system and profited from it would realize the inevitable nature of the changes called for in the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

36. Mr. BUKETI (Zaire) said that the problem of information was becoming increasingly important, so that individual or collective life depended on the ability to inform and be informed, or was conditioned by that ability. The new world information and communication order was part of the concerns raised by the establishment of a new, more just and equitable international economic order since the former was based on the latter, which defined it, justified it and gave it meaning. The time had come to break with the outmoded methods of disseminating information, which were unjust and ineffective.

37. His delegation approached the question of a new information order, bearing in mind the commitment to a new ethical system in international relations, one of understanding and mutually advantageous co-operation within the framework of human solidarity, world peace and international security. The achievement of a new world information and communication order presupposed the dissemination of objective, impartial and complete information which would help create trust; correct and balanced information which would promote development; and information which was free and afforded security, since the final goal of information was still to bring peoples closer together.

38. The achievement of a new world information and communication order presupposed the acceptance by the developed countries of the principle of the democratization of international relations, the dual corollary of which was renunciation of the monopoly which they possessed and the right of all peoples to be informed, and the elimination of all obstacles impeding the effective transfer of technology suitable to the needs of developing countries. Lastly it entailed the creation of a favourable framework, which would be the United Nations, and the carrying out of the consequent activities in each country. In that regard, Zaire had a telecommunications, radio and press sector; it hoped to receive co-operation from the developed countries and also placed its installations at the disposal of certain African countries within the framework of regional and subregional co-operation.

(Mr. Buketi, Zaire)

39. The developing countries were basing their hopes on the role of the United Nations in the establishment of a new world information and communication order for the combating of injustices at the political, economic, social and cultural level. World peace, international security and co-operation were inseparably linked to efforts to bring organization to diversity and the "value of autonomy" in a world which would continue to become interdependent.

40. Mr. PALMA GIL (Philippines) said that his Government had participated in the efforts undertaken by the international community to consider and solve the problems related to information and communication, in accordance with mankind's aspirations for a new world order founded on peace, understanding and social justice. The position of his delegation on the question of information was well known: although freedom of information was a legitimate principle, it must be based on responsibility. Otherwise, that freedom could become a dangerous instrument at the service of vested interests. Furthermore, it had been clearly seen how the "free flow of information" had enabled mass media monopolies to control the content and direction of news and information throughout the world, often to the detriment of the developing countries. It had also been observed with alarm how the power of such monopolies had distorted the image of the United Nations in its numerous activities designed to promote peace, development and international co-operation. His Government had always held the view that the current state of imbalance and the qualitative deficiencies in the field of information which existed in the contemporary world should be corrected without delay and that the developing countries, which comprised more than 80 per cent of the countries of the world, should be allowed to play a creative role in that field.

41. With regard to the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information (A/38/21), his delegation was gratified that 62 action-oriented recommendations had been adopted by consensus. The Philippines would support the renewal of the mandate of the Committee on Information, and attached particular importance to its recommendation on ways of increasing co-operation between the United Nations and UNESCO with a view to the establishment of a new world information and communication order. His delegation supported the continuing efforts of United Nations organizations, especially UNESCO, to provide assistance to the developing countries in such areas as the training of journalists and technical personnel, the establishment of appropriate research and educational facilities, and the creation of conditions that would gradually enable the developing countries to develop the communications technology suited to their resources and needs. Support should be given to the International Programme for the Development of Communication, since it was an effective means of developing and strengthening the information-communications infrastructures of third-world nations.

42. The distorted image of the United Nations should be rectified. The report of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (A/AC.198/68) was a reminder to Member States that the United Nations had to undertake internal reforms aimed at strengthening its public information service, so that more accurate picture of its activities in the economic and social fields could be presented. The appeals by the United Nations to Governments and the mass media for more balanced reporting about its manifold activities would be ineffective without a determined effort by the Organization to improve its own public information system.

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(Mr. Palma Gil, Philippines)

43. In that connection, his delegation supported recommendation No. 34 concerning the upgrading of the United Nations information centres throughout the world and the maximization of their resources. It also supported recommendation No. 43 concerning the development of an effective system for evaluating the activities of the Department of Public Information. In addition to the 62 recommendations adopted by consensus, the Committee on Information had adopted three recommendations whose implementation would have to be decided upon by the General Assembly in the light of statements on their financial implications. His delegation supported those recommendations especially those concerning the introduction of French/Creole and Dutch/Papiamentu programming in the Caribbean Unit of the Radio Service and the reopening of the United Nations Information Centre in Jakarta.

44. The report of the Committee on Information also contained a number of proposals on which no agreement had been reached. His delegation hoped that at least a few of them could be accepted by the Special Political Committee. In that connection, the Philippines wished to point out the significance to the international community of General Assembly resolution 37/92 on the Principles Governing the Use by States of Artificial Earth Satellites for International Direct Television Broadcasting. While his delegation had consistently laid stress on greater efficiency and economy in the activities of the Department of Public Information, it supported the view that additional resources should be made available to the Department so that it could cope with its expanded responsibilities and tasks. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that all States Members of the United Nations would actively support the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

45. Mr. IBRA DEGUENE KA (Senegal) said that information and communications added a new dimension to the perception of the problems of contemporary societies and influenced their judgement and collective attitudes. By reflecting the international distribution of economic and technological power, the mass media were creating an asymmetrical structure that was growing as fast as the disparities between countries.

46. In the nineteenth century, Karl Marx had argued that the dominant ideas were those of the ruling classes; at present, the dominant messages in the field of information and communications were those of the ruling nations. It was therefore imperative to establish a multidirectional flow of information, to decolonize information, to ensure respect for the values of all civilizations and to strengthen the real capability of the developing countries to acquire technical and human resources in the area of information.

47. The mass media should be concerned with explaining impartially the real problems besetting the world: the situation of the developing countries struggling to emerge from the world economic crisis, the benefits that certain countries would enjoy by ending colonialism and establishing relations of co-operation on a footing of equality with the countries that were currently under domination, the true dimensions of the Palestinian tragedy and, in general, the benefits of the interdependence of peoples in a world of peace.

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(Mr. Ibra Déguène Ka, Senegal)

48. At the summit meeting of the non-aligned countries and in the Organization of African Unity, the third-world countries had calmly but firmly stressed the need for a new world information and communication order based on the free circulation of information, equality and changes in the current situation of dependence.

49. Senegal commended the Director-General of UNESCO for the Organization's constructive role in implementing the International Programme for the Development of Communication. Senegal also commended Mr. Bechir Toual, who presided over the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, for promoting co-operation with the Department of Public Information. Further resources should be made available for the training of journalists.

50. Senegal welcomed the progress made by the Department in redressing the imbalances in certain sectors of the Press Section. It also welcomed recommendation No. 30 (a) of the Committee on Information regarding material in the French language (A/38/21, p. 26).

51. Mrs. CARRASCO (Bolivia) noted that, in 1964, UNESCO had formally adopted as an item the question of communications and information as factors influencing the internal development of States. More recently, it had organized scientific and technical information systems such as the World Information System for Science and Technology, while other systems had been developed by FAO, WHO and IAEA.

52. As recommended in the report of the Committee on Information (A/38/21), the effectiveness of the information centres should be enhanced through the appointment of qualified persons with professional experience from all different geographical regions. The available resources should be reallocated for reproduction and other expenditures.

53. It was essential to explain the role of the United Nations to the peoples of the world in order to secure moral support for the maintenance of peace and the observance of the principles of international law embodied in the Charter. The importance of the information centres took on a new dimension with their activities in the sphere of preventive diplomacy. Her Government was very satisfied with the performance of the Information Centre in La Paz.

54. Her Government was circulating the texts of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in Aymaran and Quechua, thus acquainting the rural population of Bolivia with those legal principles and securing its support for the objectives of the United Nations.

55. Information should be regarded as the patrimony of society, not as an element to be exploited. The current system, controlled by powerful agencies in the developed countries, was promoting domination by those countries and serving as a vehicle for ideological models and lifestyles that were alien to the societies to which they were introduced. All human beings had the right not only to receive accurate information freely, but also to participate in the processing and transmission of information.

56. Mr. Starčević (Yugoslavia) took the Chair.

57. Mr. KABAYABA (Burundi) said that information and communication held the key to the problem of solidarity in the contemporary world. They were undeniably successful for purposes of relaxation and constituted a decisive force at the socio-economic, political, diplomatic, strategic and cultural levels. However, information and communication were also two-edged weapons; manipulated and distorted, they carried within them the germs of warfare, confrontation and destruction, for the accuracy of information had an impact on understanding and trust among peoples.

58. Accordingly, information and communication had to be objective and accurate and should never stray from the principles of morality, equity and good faith. Their usefulness depended on content, truth and means of dissemination. The developing countries had not always had agreeable experiences with regard to information. There were entire communities which knew no more than what others wanted them to know. It was unclear what benefits they could enjoy in such circumstances. Instead of fostering progress, the monopolization of information led to the imposition of values, intellectual violence, prejudice, false theories and stereotyped behaviour. It had become impossible to examine international relations without reference to the disparity between the satiated North and the deprived South; the disparity was also in evidence in the field of information.

59. It was not surprising that the economic underdevelopment of some countries should continue to exist alongside the overdevelopment of others. The relationship between lack of information and ignorance on the one hand and poverty, disease, destitution and underdevelopment on the other, was well known.

60. Mere recognition of the interdependence of development and information led to acceptance of the fact that information was of concern to all. The Department of Public Information of the United Nations and UNESCO were making an important contribution to the establishment of a new world information and communication order in co-operation with the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and with regional and national information institutions in developing countries. The future work of the Department would be truly positive when it devoted itself to the promotion of progressive ideas, especially those usually opposed and resisted by conservative trends. Instead of trying to maintain a tempting and prideful but ephemeral status quo, those countries should opt for a change which would be lasting and advantageous for all.

61. Developing countries also needed to be convinced of the increasing importance of international information and of the wisdom of participating actively in the acquisition of necessary technology from developed countries, without confining themselves to second-class knowledge.

62. The least-developed countries should have United Nations information centres which were well equipped and staffed with trained personnel who were familiar with local needs.

(Mr. Kabayaba, Burundi)

63. Information should be responsibly managed, enabling all countries to preserve their political systems, their own ideology and culture and their national character. Although information in itself could not resolve all developmental problems, it could certainly assist in understanding and finding solutions to them. The threefold interaction of information, technology and development could be successful only when emphasis was no longer placed on information that was sensational and deliberately misleading. Information needed to be complete, objective and useful, since the new world information order was an indispensable step towards the achievement of a new international economic order.

64. Mr. NYAMUDAHONDO (Zimbabwe) said that his delegation attached special importance to the item under consideration because of the outstanding role which it played in the achievement of development. In the search for a new information and communication order, full account should be taken of the realities of a changing world. Therefore, opinions, facts and ideas should be reflected by the mass media in a better and more balanced manner. If adequate and relevant information did not reach the majority of people, it would be extremely hard to co-ordinate and implement programmes. Accordingly, the developed countries should assist the less developed countries to ensure that all peoples had access to information, that the information did not hinder development programmes and that it was inspirational and educational. Effective and meaningful progress, however, could be made only through commitment to all the principles relating to freedom of information: mutual respect, the free flow of information and the better-balanced dissemination of information, guaranteeing the diversity of information sources both between and within countries.

65. The world military and political climate was worsening daily, yet the majority of the world's peoples were being given false information by the media. Public information and the mass media had a vital role to play in any country. They should increase public awareness of all serious situations that threatened the survival of mankind and inform them about the efforts not only of their Governments, but also of the international community to improve their living standards. The media should tell the people their achievements so as to enable them to appreciate their successes. At the same time, they should be able to detect all alarming situations and report on them without any bias.

66. The developing countries lacked the technology and the infrastructure that were the bases for obtaining and disseminating information. That problem was an obstacle to the achievement of the goal of the free flow of information. Many developing countries were therefore compelled to be dependent on others in the field of information. He wished to ask the international community, and especially the developed countries, to assist and fully co-operate with UNESCO and other related United Nations organs in their efforts to establish a just, balanced and more effective communication order.

67. Southern Africa was one of the regions in which international peace, stability and security were threatened. The related and complementary systems of apartheid and zionism were discussed and resolutely condemned in all international forums.

(Mr. Nyamudahondo, Zimbabwe)

In the Special Political Committee and elsewhere, the domestic and regional policies of apartheid should be condemned. Behind the arrogance of South Africa was the powerful support of its friends and allies, who were also the enemies of national liberation movements in Africa and throughout the world. At the national level, the racist régime continued its policy of politically discriminating against and relentlessly exploiting the masses of the black majority, economically and culturally. The apartheid régime, feeling itself cornered by the escalating national liberation struggle, was now practising a policy of open confrontation against its neighbours. It was suprising that the international mass media did not feel duty-bound to condemn such a Government. He called upon them to assist in bringing those criminal, legal and inhuman practices to an end.

68. Lastly, he welcomed the training programme for broadcasters and journalists, as well as the proposals and suggestions of the Committee on Information scheduled for implementation in the immediate future. The recommendations of the Committee on Information could go a long way towards meeting the requirements of the future.

69. Mr. LEVIN (Israel) said that the great efforts already invested in the work of the Special Political Committee on questions relating to information should be commended as a dedicated search for solutions to one of the critical problems currently facing the world. However, many difficulties of a political, economic and technological nature, requiring a minimal amount of understanding and co-operation, remained to be resolved.

70. Of the three types of problems which the Committee faced, the technological ones were, of course, the least difficult. Communication systems had been developed to a point where a new world information order could easily be established, provided sufficient motivation and political will existed, as well as the requisite resources. The barriers which had to be overcome were not substantially different from the great divisions that separated the world: socio-economic and political systems, a variety of cultures, and an ever-present disparity in wealth and development.

71. The premise that a change in information systems could contribute to a benign development and evolution was, at the least, debatable. He did not believe, however, that the achievement of that goal was condemned a priori to failure, since its merits were such that they merited the support and dedication of all. At the same time, the various stages had to be established in a realistic manner in order to avoid untimely failure.

72. It was important to reduce as far as possible the risk of creating new obstacles instead of resolving the political problems which already existed. There should be no attempts to seize on information questions as an additional means to an entirely different end. The cause of information was far too important. Permitting the saboteurs to engage in such an exercise would deny the right of those who were sincerely banking on a better deal in the field of communications.

(Mr. Levin, Israel)

73. Unfortunately, the Organization was replete with cells, units and committees set up in response to group pressures which spent the world's money in organizing unnecessary meetings in far-away places and envenomed the United Nations atmosphere. Some of those units were devoted solely to the promotion of political and psychological warfare against Member States of the Organization, particularly against Israel. The channels of communication, publication and dissemination of the United Nations were already overburdened by the Arab propaganda efforts, and the Committee should steer clear of such associations.

74. The introduction of several paragraphs during the thirty-seventh session had indicated that preparations for the misuse of item 72 towards partisan ends had already begun. The problems relating to the Arab-Israel conflict should be returned to where they belonged: items 73 and 69. When resolutions came up for voting under the current item, subjects pertaining to the Middle East should be relegated to where they properly belonged.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.