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**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING**

**Chairman: Mr. DIALLO (Guinea)**

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (A/39/21)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/39/479)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO) (A/39/497)
- (d) REPORTS OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT, AND COMMENTS THEREON (A/39/239, Add.1 and Corr.1 and Add.2, A/39/602)

1. Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information)\* said that there was a need to examine the reason why public understanding and public support for the United Nations, which were in a symbiotic relationship, had regressed at a time when the world situation would seem to demand their strengthening, and to ask what could be done to reverse such a trend. The mandate of the Department of Public Information (DPI) was to promote an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations among the peoples of the world; but the Department could not work in isolation: those objectives could be fulfilled only with the assistance and co-operation of member Governments and their public information media.

2. The need for a common understanding of the problems faced, and for a joint information strategy to achieve their objectives had been stressed during the substantive session of the Committee on Information in 1984. Because of the highly sensitive and potentially controversial nature of information activity, the desirability of a consensual approach could not be over-emphasized.

3. Global consciousness-raising was at the heart of many United Nations endeavours, and the demands placed on the Department for services of all kinds to ensure greater public attention and wider mobilization of support had multiplied. There was an urgent need to bridge the gap between the activities and performance of United Nations bodies and their perception by different sectors of opinion in different countries, because that perception affected the foreign policy options of national leaders.

4. The Department had made steady and well-co-ordinated progress in the areas mentioned in the three-fold mandate given by the General Assembly under which both it and the Committee on Information operated. In the context of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order, world mass media leaders round tables had been held at Arusha in Africa and Shanghai in Asia. The annual editors' round table had been concluded the previous

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\* A full transcription of this statement will be issued in document A/SPC/39/PV.19.



(Mr. Akashi)

week at United Nations Headquarters. He had been greatly encouraged by the positive comments made by participants in the round tables, which would continue to be held in both developing and industrialized countries.

5. In the same context, the Department's Training Programme for Broadcasters and Journalists, which trained young broadcasters and journalists from developing countries in the latest techniques and technology, continued to attract wide interest. As requested the previous year by the General Assembly, the Department was examining arrangements for a one-week visit by the 1984 trainees to a developing country, to see the ways in which information on the United Nations was received and utilized.

6. The Department's co-operation with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and the Pan African News Agency was making good progress. The current state of co-operation between the Department and the Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa was described in document A/39/479. He had been in close consultation with the Director-General and Assistant Director-General for Communication of UNESCO on the convening, as requested by General Assembly resolution 38/82 B, of a second round table in 1984-1985 to follow up progress made towards the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

7. Regional centre directors' meetings held at United Nations Headquarters had continued to be helpful in assessing the needs of the network of United Nations information centres and conveying to their directors the public information policies of Headquarters, in the context of strengthening and streamlining the network of centres. One such meeting had been held in March 1984 in Africa. The meetings had highlighted the need for decentralization in the management of information centres and greater flexibility for directors in implementing the Department's policies and programmes. It had, for example, been decided to encourage more production at the subregional level in Africa in French and Swahili, to organize more regional meetings for training, and to bring to Headquarters the centre directors serving in various European countries. Progress had also been made in setting up new information centres, pursuant to the decisions of the General Assembly, in Managua and Panama. The generous support of the Governments concerned had been particularly appreciated at a time of serious financial constraint. Negotiations with the Governments of Angola and Indonesia were continuing with regard to the legal aspects of the opening or reopening of centres in Luanda and Jakarta; the appointments of full-time centre directors in Bujumbura and Yaoundé were also under active consideration. The United Nations Information Service in Vienna was already functioning. Contact had been made with the Department of Administration and Management concerning the modalities for establishing the post of the head of that Service.

8. In 1983 the General Assembly had underlined the intrinsic functions of United Nations information centres as distinct from the operational activities of the United Nations system for development. The Department continued to seek to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination between UNDP field officers and its own information centres. In view of the interest shown by a number of States in the establishment of new information centres, he found it necessary to emphasize the clear need for the most economical use of the very limited resources available to the Department and the danger of their excessive dispersal among many duty stations.

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(Mr. Akashi)

9. With regard to the Radio and Visual Services of the Department, he wished to add a few points arising from the report of the Committee on Information (A/39/21). Should the Assembly adopt recommendation 29, concerning a United Nations communications satellite, it would be necessary for the Department to work in collaboration with the Office of General Services and all relevant specialized agencies in preparing a report on the potential uses of such a satellite by the United Nations system.

10. In recommendation 43, the Committee had asked for an evaluation report on the question of embarking upon daily short-wave broadcasts from Headquarters. Starting in January 1985 the Department would commence experimental broadcasts and a survey, to determine whether daily short-wave radio programmes from United Nations Headquarters could attract a significant number of listeners; a further report on the matter would be made to the Committee on Information in 1985. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/82 B, in addition to continued production of weekly news magazines in Spanish for Latin America, in Arabic for the Middle East and in French for Africa, production of two television magazines a month in Chinese had been started, at the request of Central Chinese Television.

11. Strenuous efforts to reduce the growth in the Department's programme budget had continued over the past year, and its internal evaluation capacity had been strengthened. The Department had established a comprehensive system for monitoring its activities, which had enabled it to move on to the actual evaluation of their effectiveness. The distribution of taped radio programmes was the first such activity being evaluated, and the resulting report would be submitted to the Committee of Information in 1985. The Department now had a greater awareness of the end use made of its products and a sharper focus on the target audience of its activities. However, much remained to be done in order to bring greater efficiency and effectiveness to their work. Although some obstacles lay beyond the competence of the Department, productivity was being improved through better team work and staff motivation. The Department, while stressing the need for continued improvement in its capacity to evaluate its work, would endeavour to maintain the necessary balance between the cost of evaluation and the benefits accrued.

12. The Committee on Information had recognized the importance of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) as the essential instrument for inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination in the field of public information and called for its further strengthening and an increase in its responsibility for the public information activities of the entire United Nations information system. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, at its meeting in London in early 1983, had given careful consideration to system-wide activity to meet the challenge posed by some public questioning of the United Nations and its effectiveness. The members of JUNIC had decided to undertake a number of projects in addition to its work programme for 1984-1985, relating to information efforts focusing on the operational activities of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields.

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(Mr. Akashi)

13. The Secretary-General had called for a major educative effort involving Governments, the media, non-governmental organizations and educators, in connection with the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations. Taking that directive as its basic guideline, the Department was preparing a programme of information activities for the anniversary which would give the public a sober assessment of the Organization's record and of its current situation. While of necessity publicizing United Nations work in some specific, especially new or compelling areas, the Department would retain an overall vision of the United Nations and take an integrative approach rather than concentrating on specific economic or social activities at the expense of political activities, or vice versa. The public should be informed about United Nations endeavours to provide the instrumentalities necessary for a truly international society.

14. For a number of years, the question of the role of the Department as the focal point for all United Nations information activities had been the subject of debate in the Special Political Committee and the Committee on Information. He drew attention, in particular, to the latter's recommendation, at its 1983 substantive session, that the proliferation of information units in the Secretariat independent of the Department should be discouraged.

15. As to the Department's role with respect to the desire of some intergovernmental bodies to edit information programmes relating to their areas of interest, he pointed out that the relationship between legislative and executive bodies should be that of a mutually reinforcing co-operation. The Secretariat should, however, be allowed to implement the directives which it had received in the most effective manner possible, subject to periodic legislative review.

16. The Department's primary responsibility would continue to be to the entire membership of the Organization. In applying that principle, it should be accepted that the work of the Department by its very nature necessitated the retention of a certain editorial discretion if it was to maintain its credibility as an impartial organ of information.

17. In conclusion, he reaffirmed the Department's unswerving resolve to carry out its demanding but crucial task. He looked forward to hearing the views and comments of the representatives of member Governments on the vital issue of international communication.

18. Mr. MORENO-SALCEDO (Chairman of the Committee on Information)\* introduced the report of the Committee on Information (A/39/21) and said that part III, the most important section of the report, dealt with the results and accomplishments of the Committee's substantive session, held from 18 June to 6 July 1984, and on 6 September 1984. It enumerated 59 recommendations which had been adopted without

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\* A full transcription of this statement will be issued in document A/SPC/39/PV.19.



(Mr. Moreno-Salcedo)

a vote by the Committee, taking into account the reservations and positions of four Member States. The fact that those recommendations had been adopted without a vote was proof that countries with differing interests and ideological persuasions could agree on measures to pursue common objectives, and was also a tribute to the spirit of understanding, accommodation and co-operation among the members of the Committee.

19. The recommendations adopted by the Committee on Information during its 1984 substantive session corresponded to its threefold mandate; they concerned specific steps to promote the early establishment of the new world information and communication order, and on various proposals to enhance the information tasks of the United Nations Department of Public Information.

20. The Committee had once again emphasized the need for all countries, the United Nations system as a whole, and all others concerned, to collaborate in the establishment of a new world information and communication order. The Committee had recommended that the General Assembly should appeal to the mass media to respond in a positive way to the opportunities available to them to make an important contribution to enhancing and strengthening peace, deepening international understanding, promoting justice, equality, national independence, development, the exercise of human rights and the establishment of the new world information and communication order.

21. Considerable attention had been devoted to the need to enable the developing countries to improve their embryonic communication infrastructures by promoting their access to communication technology, including communication satellites, modern electronic information systems and informatics. Urgent measures recommended in that respect included assistance to developing countries in training journalists and technical personnel, granting favourable conditions to developing countries for access to such communication technology as might be suited to their needs. The Committee had underlined the importance, in that regard, of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

22. The Committee had recommended the strengthening of links between DPI and the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool and had requested the Secretary-General to prepare a consolidated study on the contributions, effects and levels of co-ordination between UNDP, UNESCO, IPDC and ITU in support of the development of information and communication structures and systems in the developing countries.

23. Recognizing the central and important role played by UNESCO in the field of information and communication, the Committee had recommended that the United Nations system as a whole, and all others concerned, should be urged to give UNESCO adequate support and assistance in that field. The Committee had called upon DPI to co-operate with UNESCO on a more regular basis with a view to maximizing their joint contributions to the establishment of a new world information and communication order. It had re-emphasized the role of the Department as the focal point for the formulation and implementation of information activities of the United Nations and recommended that the proliferation of information units in the Secretariat, independent of the Department, be discouraged.

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(Mr. Moreno-Salcedo)

24. The celebration in 1984 of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations would provide an opportunity to evaluate the achievements of the Organization since its creation and to improve its functioning as an instrument for peace, co-operation and development. Recognizing that such an occasion should be celebrated in a fitting manner, the Committee had recommended that the Department give appropriate support to the plans of the Preparatory Committee for the Fortieth Anniversary of the United Nations by promoting and publicizing the aims and accomplishments of the United Nations as a forum for the pooling of efforts of States to contribute to the solution of vital world problems.

25. The Committee had also examined ways of rectifying the sometimes highly distorted image of the United Nations in the eyes of the general public; it had emphasized the need for the Department to give wider coverage to economic, social and development activities throughout the United Nations system.

26. He hoped that a draft resolution reaffirming the mandate of the Committee on Information and approving its latest report to the General Assembly, as well as the recommendations contained therein, would be adopted by the Special Political Committee without a vote and that inclusion of the People's Republic of China and Mexico as members of the Committee of Information, as they had requested, could be unanimously approved and recommended to the General Assembly.

27. Mr. PASQUALI (Assistant Director-General ad interim for the Communication Sector of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization),\* supplementing the information contained in the Director-General's report (A/39/497, annex), said that, following a series of decisions taken by the Executive Board in the spring, six working groups had engaged in intense activities with the view to improving the functioning of UNESCO and that appreciable results had already been achieved. At the same time, the UNESCO secretariat had prepared a preliminary draft programme and budget for 1986-1987, based primarily on the replies submitted by member States and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in response to a questionnaire. The Executive Board, which had praised the accuracy and objectivity of the secretariat's collation of the replies, had recommended that the Director-General should submit to the General Conference in October 1985 a draft programme and budget for 1986-1987, based on the second medium-term plan for 1984-1989, on the replies from member States and on the relevant recommendations adopted by the Board. The draft resolution containing those recommendations had been adopted unanimously.

28. Referring to Major Programme III concerning communication in the service of man, he read out paragraphs 24 and 28 of the Board's recommendation in that regard, which attached high priority to Programme III.3 and, in that context, to the strengthening of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), particularly through an increase in resources, to the training of personnel and to the installation of appropriate facilities and equipment.

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(Mr. Pasquali)

29. Approximately 60 new requests for assistance had been received by the IPDC office - 7 from intergovernmental organizations, 5 from non-governmental organizations, 10 regional and 38 national requests - in response to which the UNESCO secretariat had sent more than 50 missions to 45 countries. The Executive Board had adopted a resolution on that subject, and an IPDC-UNESCO prize for rural communications had been created, with a grant of \$20,000 from the United States, and would be awarded every two years, starting in 1985.

30. In view of the need for additional resources for the IPDC Special Account, the Director-General had expressed his willingness again to appeal to member States for voluntary contributions to the Programme. Nevertheless, IPDC had experienced considerable success in the field of vocational training, thanks to the assistance outlined in paragraph 9 of the report (A/39/497). Moreover, since May 1984, the Programme had received \$24,280 from Yugoslavia, \$100,000 from India, \$2,537,000 French francs from France and \$550,000 from the United States, which should be added to the amounts mentioned in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the report. Thus far, the largest contributions to the Special Account had been made by Norway, the Soviet Union, Japan and France and, to the funds-in-trust, by Switzerland, the United States, the Netherlands, France and the Republic of Korea. In the context of the activities outlined in paragraph 7 of the report, decisions had been taken to strengthen co-operation between IPDC and the UNESCO secretariat, and the IPDC inter-agency group was to hold its seventh meeting in December.

31. In 1986 and 1987, UNESCO intended to assess the impact of new information and communication technologies in different industrialized and developing societies through a comparative, action-oriented, intercultural evaluation. In that connection, the first approach would consist in encouraging the pooling and distribution of subjects, methods and results of research at the regional and international levels, using UNESCO networks, and, the second, in establishing co-operation between institutions interested in carrying out joint studies on the impact of new technologies. Consultations would be held by geographical area to help to identify those institutions which wished to co-operate in joint research programmes.

32. With regard to the activities relating to the establishment of a new world information and communication order, he drew attention to the Board's decision to the effect that research on that theme should focus on collating the work already accomplished, analysing its conclusions and broadening the study-base, if necessary. Accordingly, the secretariat would propose activities for inclusion in the final draft programme and budget for 1986-1987 and would pursue its co-operation with DPI with a view to holding a second joint round-table meeting in 1985 to consider what remained to be done with a view to establishing the new world order.

33. More than 80 per cent of the resources allocated to the UNESCO Communication Sector were devoted to operational activities for the development of communication in all aspects. Those activities enjoyed universal support, and criticism had been expressed only with regard to certain aspects of the research activities.

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(Mr. Pasquali)

Moreover, the Executive Board had endorsed the proposals submitted by the Director-General in that regard. Activities in 1986 and 1987 would focus on the communication problems which had not yet been studied and would be directed towards facilitating exchanges of research information, strengthening co-operation between research institutes, increasing national and regional research capacities and training researchers, particularly in the developing countries, through co-operation with professional and non-governmental organizations.

34. Referring to questions raised about the working conditions of journalists, he drew attention to the comments made by the Director-General and to the Executive Board's decision on Major Programme III to the effect that it was the role of UNESCO to extend its assistance to the initiatives taken by the competent professional associations.

35. The UNESCO contribution to the International Youth Year would consist primarily in encouraging the development of the critical faculties of young people in connection with the media and improving understanding of the media's contribution to sports and to international co-operation. Studies would also be undertaken on the media, violence and young people and on youth and access to books and reading.

36. In the context of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women, research would be conducted on the image of women presented by the mass media in different parts of the world and, in particular, on the ways in which that image conflicted with human rights.

37. Mr. FORDE (Chairman, Joint Inspection Unit)\* introduced the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on publications policy and practice in the United Nations system (A/39/239) and observed that, while publications helped to project a favourable image of the United Nations, their cost amounted to an estimated 10 per cent of the regular budget of organizations in the system.

38. It was important to determine whether United Nations publications were effective, not only in terms of cost, but in terms of developmental and communications objectives. It was therefore essential for organizations to know whether the information they disseminated was being used, how and by whom. Accordingly, the JIU report discussed ways in which organizations could answer those questions.

39. The Inspectors believed that sales should be viewed as a complement to the free distribution of publications and as an integral part of publishing programmes. Moreover, sales provided relatively substantial income, which could be

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(Mr. Forde)

reinvested in publications. Successful publishing required planning with a view to sales at the early stages of publication conception. It required identification of the market, adjustment of the publication's contents to that market and quality control. More emphasis must be placed on promotion, marketing and distribution, even if that entailed a reduction in the quantity published.

40. Several difficulties had been isolated. For example, the fact that documentation had priority over publications sometimes prevented the timely issuance of publications, thereby rendering them ineffective. The United Nations generally did not choose its publications, which were mandated, and, accordingly, it might be worthwhile to examine whether mandated publications were effective.

41. He outlined the main recommendations contained in part II of the report (A/39/239, paras. 108-135) and drew attention to table V (A/39/239, p. 30). In that connection, he expressed the hope that members of the Committee would give particular consideration to the issues raised in part II, chapter V (paras. 108-121), and would indicate which recommendations they endorsed.

42. Although the Secretary-General's comments (A/39/239/Add.1) had been helpful, the Inspectors had hoped for a clearer indication as to whether governing bodies should demand a more integrated approach to publishing and should take the steps recommended in paragraphs 108 to 112 (A/39/239), whether the true costs of publications should be determined unequivocally and whether more money should be spent on marketing, promotion and distribution, if necessary by reducing the amount of material published. The answers to those questions would help to determine whether the effectiveness of publishing in the United Nations system would be improved and, in that connection, the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/39/602) were particularly relevant.

43. Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia) requested transcriptions of the statements made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, the Chairman of the Committee on Information and the Assistant Director-General ad interim for the Communication Sector of UNESCO.

44. Mr. RASMUSSEN (Denmark) requested a transcription of the statement made by the Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit.

45. The CHAIRMAN recalled that the General Assembly had approved the recommendation of the General Committee that during the current session the Special Political Committee should again be authorized to receive, on specific request, transcriptions of the debates of some of its meetings, or portions thereof. Those transcriptions did not entail any additional budgetary expenses as they were prepared by verbatim reporters and typists from the tapes when the staff concerned were not otherwise occupied in servicing meetings normally provided with verbatim records. Consequently, they might appear at a later stage than the summary records which, as the official records, were complete records of the Committee's proceedings. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee acceded to the request.

46. It was so decided.

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47. Mr. BAALI (Algeria) said that the peoples of the third world had forcefully proclaimed their desire to bring about a new world information and communication order, reflecting the profound aspiration of oppressed peoples for democracy and justice. At the current time a small group of countries overwhelmingly dominated the field of information and imposed their own cultural patterns and values on less developed countries through the use of sophisticated technology. Freedom of information had no meaning if there was no alternative sources of information and if it was impossible to verify the accuracy and impartiality of such information.

48. His delegation commended the work of UNESCO in promoting a new world information order and furthering understanding among peoples. His Government commended the efforts of the Director-General, who had undertaken that task with such devotion. IPDC was the most significant step taken in the establishment of a new world information and communication order and should be provided with the necessary financing. The last session of the Intergovernmental Council of IPDC marked an important turning point in the elaboration of projects designed to meet the legitimate aspirations of developing countries in the field of information.

49. One year before the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations, it was regrettable that the Organization continued to be subjected to the most virulent criticism, which severely damaged its image and credibility. Such criticism, which was often deliberately hostile to the Organization, was designed to discredit the United Nations in world public opinion, particularly in the West, and impair its effectiveness. The criticism of UNESCO, which was portrayed as a politicized and spendthrift organization hostile to the West, demonstrated the ulterior motives and power of those who sought to denigrate the United Nations.

50. The Department of Public Information had a particular responsibility for disseminating accurate information on the activities of the Organization. The United Nations information centres throughout the world constituted the most effective means of better informing the public, particularly in Western countries, in that regard. In order to increase its effectiveness, DPI must adopt a more imaginative and creative approach in carrying out its task.

51. The establishment of the regional news agencies had been a very important step towards the establishment of a new world information order. Those agencies, which symbolized the will of developing countries to make a novel contribution to the field of information, should be supported and provided with technical and political assistance by the United Nations. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the co-operation between DPI and the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool and the support of IPDC for the development and strengthening of national and regional news agencies in the third world. The co-operation between the United Nations and UNESCO on the one hand and the press agencies of third world countries on the other should continue and should be diversified. In that regard, DPI and the pool of non-aligned press agencies should co-operate on a more consistent basis.

52. The publications which promoted a better awareness of developing countries should continue to be supported by the Organization. In that connection, he stressed that Development Forum and the World Newspaper Supplement should be given

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(Mr. Baali, Algeria)

sound financial support in order to overcome the serious difficulties facing them and ensure their continued existence.

53. The difficulties which had arisen in the discussions of the Committee on Information over the past two years were not due solely to problems of a financial nature. There was a growing hostility on the part of certain countries against the noble idea of the establishment of a new world information order based on justice and equality. Thanks to the wisdom of the members of the Group of 77 and those who believed in justice, the Committee on Information had been able to adopt a number of recommendations at its substantive session. His delegation fully supported those recommendations and expressed the hope that they would be adopted without amendment by the General Assembly.

54. Some progress had been made since the international community had given its support for the establishment of a new world information and communication order. Nevertheless, the large information agencies, in the search for ever-greater profits, continued to monopolize the field of information, thus reinforcing prejudices and giving rise to ill-feeling. The time had come for the developed countries to realize that a constructive North-South dialogue must be based on an equal and responsible partnership without the political, economic and cultural domination which they sought to impose on third world countries.

55. Mr. FARRELL (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the ten States members of the European Community, said that the free and effective dissemination of information was critical for the attainment of the objectives of the Organization. The activities of the Department of Public Information were essential in that respect. The Ten attached particular importance to the Department's efforts to promote the economic, social and cultural development of the developing countries through the use of journalistic techniques. In that connection, more attention should be given to improving the current limited dialogue between developing and developed countries and among developing countries themselves.

56. High priority should also be given to social and economic information. The public image of the Organization would be improved if the Department gave greater publicity to the economic and social activities of the United Nations. Many of the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information (A/39/21) dealt with DPI. The Ten shared the view of the Secretary-General on the need for economy and sound management and stressed that need with regard to the activities of the Department. The efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information in that respect were commendable. Requests for the implementation of new programmes should not be made without a concerted effort to identify lower priority programmes and potential savings. The Secretariat should put forward its own ideas on programmes which were becoming obsolete or which were of lesser priority. The evaluation of the Department's activities could be intensified and the results followed up. The Joint Inspection Unit, for example, could evaluate its activities over a period of several years.

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(Mr. Farrell, Ireland)

57. DPI should give continuous attention to promoting the understanding and implementation of human rights in view of the frequent violations in various parts of the world. To ensure popular support for the Organization, DPI should always strive for the highest quality and maintain standards of impartiality, reflecting divergences of opinion whenever they occurred.

58. Freedom of thought, opinion and expression and the free flow of information and ideas were essential to the exercise of human rights. The best defence of those rights lay in a well-informed and critical public all over the world. The Ten reiterated their commitment to the establishment of a more just and more effective new world information and communication order. The flow of communication between developed and developing countries should be improved. Facts and opinions should be reflected by the mass media in a balanced and effective manner.

59. The Ten recognized the concern of the developing and other countries at the trivialization and the distortion of information. They could not, however, support proposals for restrictions, less access to information, the imposition of censorship or any reduction in existing freedoms. Mutual understanding was advanced by more extensive communication, not by less. Communication and information should not be subservient to the policies of Governments. A free press was necessary to keep citizens well informed, monitor Government activities, and reflect public opinion and exercise criticism where necessary.

60. At the same time, however, every community had the right to preserve its language and culture. The Ten stressed the complementary nature of the relationship between freedom of information, responsibility on the part of the media and the right of each community to express and preserve its own personality.

61. The Ten recognized the link between economic development and access to sources of information and were prepared to assist developing countries overcome imbalances in the flow of information by improving their communication abilities. They favoured a plurality of sources of information, both within and between countries, in order to redress existing imbalances in the world-wide flow of information.

62. They particularly appreciated the detailed consideration of information questions by UNESCO, which played the primary role in the deliberations on a new world information and communication order. The establishment of the International Programme for Development of Communication was an important step towards improving communication capabilities in less-developed countries. The Ten recommended the continued publication of Development Forum and called upon all the United Nations specialized agencies to contribute to its financing. Lastly, they stressed the need to avoid politicizing questions concerning information and expressed the hope that the resolutions on that item could be adopted without a vote.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.