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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE  
51st meeting  
held on  
Monday, 10 December 1984  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

DEC 21 1984

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 51st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DIALLO (Guinea)

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COMPLETION OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

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13 December 1984

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

AGENDA ITEM 74: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1, L.21/Rev.1 and L.31 and Add.1)

(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)

1. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 were contained in documents A/SPC/39/L.31 and Add.1.

2. Mr. DUARTE COSTA (Portugal) said that there was a discrepancy between the English and French texts of the fourteenth and fifteenth preambular paragraphs of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1. The English text referred to "a new world information and communication order", while the French text referred to "the new world information and communication order". Furthermore, in the French text of paragraph 14 the phrase "of the establishment" had been omitted.

3. Mrs. RUBIALES (Nicaragua) said that there was a discrepancy between the English and Spanish texts of the second preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1. The Spanish text referred to "a new world information and communication order", while the English text referred to "the new world information and communication order".

4. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt) said that the negotiations had been based on the English text and that the translations into the other official languages would be brought into line with that text.

5. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take a decision on draft resolutions A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 and A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1. He suggested that those delegations which wished to do so should make their explanations of vote either before or after the vote.

6. It was so decided.

7. Mr. RAPIN (France), speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, said that he had already explained the difficulties which his delegation had with regard to the two draft resolutions under consideration. Those difficulties had been significantly reduced by the amendments which the sponsors of the draft resolutions had made. Nevertheless, the draft resolutions still made no mention of resolution 3.1 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-second session, which described the new world information order as "an evolving and continuous process". The fact that the sponsors of the two draft resolutions had refused to include a reference to that text was cause for concern. Disregarding the position of a large number of countries was an error which would only lead to further misunderstanding.

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(Mr. Rapin, France)

If a reference to resolution 3.1 had been included in the two draft resolutions, his delegation would have voted in favour of them. Since that was not the case, it would abstain in the vote on the two draft resolutions.

8. Ms. BELGRAVE (Barbados) said that her delegation would vote in favour of the two draft resolutions under consideration because they represented further progress towards the establishment of a new world information and communication order. Nevertheless, her Government expressed concern about the manner in which paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 would be implemented. That paragraph, inter alia, urged the full implementation of the unimplemented recommendations of General Assembly resolution 38/82 B. Paragraph 9 of that resolution requested the Secretary-General to take urgent steps, within the next programme budget, to enable the Caribbean Unit in the Radio Service of the Department of Public Information to begin a meaningful work programme, in particular, by the introduction of full programming in French/Creole, with limited programming in Dutch/Papiamentu. Although her delegation fully appreciated the progress achieved thus far by the Unit, it hoped that draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 would strengthen it further.

9. Mr. JANNUZZI (Italy) said that, in view of the importance of the questions relating to information, an effort had always been made to work on the basis of consensus. Unfortunately it had not been possible for the Working Group to reach consensus on the two draft resolutions, in spite of the efforts of all delegations concerned. His delegation had noted with appreciation that certain changes had been made in the two draft resolutions in order to meet the concerns of a number of delegations. Unfortunately, his delegation could not support the definition of the new world information order as set forth in the two draft resolutions, and would therefore abstain in the vote. It was hoped that the Committee on Information would be able to resume its work on the basis of consensus at its next session.

10. Mr. KAZAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation would vote in favour of the two draft resolutions with due account taken of their financial implications as explained by the representative of the Secretariat at the meeting of the Working Group.

11. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) said that his delegation would have preferred to have the two draft resolutions adopted by consensus. The questions relating to information were too important to become a source of conflict. Unfortunately there had been a polarization of views owing to a number of misunderstandings. Precedents had been ignored, and an attempt had been made to change previous resolutions. Certain delegations had insisted on considering questions which were not related to information and which were discussed in other forums. The Committee on Information should reaffirm freedom of information as a basic human right and promote the spread of technology to developing countries in order to further their economic, social and cultural betterment.

12. As a member of the Group of 77, Ecuador would vote in favour of the two draft resolutions. It hoped that in future the Committee on Information would be able to resume its work on the basis of consensus and avoid extreme positions.

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13. A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burma, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cameroon, Cape Verde, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Kampuchea, Democratic Yemen, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Finland, Gabon, German Democratic Republic, Greece, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: Germany, Federal Republic of, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Luxembourg, New Zealand.

14. Draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 was adopted by 108 votes to 6, with 7 abstentions.

15. A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burma, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cameroon, Cape Verde, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic Kampuchea, Democratic Yemen, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Gabon, German Democratic Republic, Guinea, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

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Against: Germany, Federal Republic of, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden.

16. Draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1 was adopted by 98 votes to 6, with 17 abstentions.

17. Ms. GROOMS (United States of America) expressed regret that the Committee had been unable to reach agreement on two consensus resolutions. After numerous meetings of the Working Group, problems that had been solved in the Committee on Information had resurfaced, making it impossible to reach a consensus on the two draft resolutions under consideration. Her delegation had been unable to accept the two draft resolutions because no reference had been made to resolution 3.1 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-second session or to the phrase "seen as an evolving and continuing process". Her Government felt that a new world information and communication order should develop naturally and could not be legislated into existence. The request by many Western delegations to include the consensus language adopted by UNESCO and accepted by all delegations had been ignored. Furthermore, the two draft resolutions contained numerous preambular and operative paragraphs that referred to declarations of regional meetings which her delegation had not even attended. The draft resolutions also endorsed several United Nations resolutions which the United States had not supported. It was not reasonable, on the one hand, to insist on the reaffirmation of declarations and resolutions which had not been adopted by consensus and, on the other hand, to reject the reaffirmation of clearly established consensus language.

18. The sponsors of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 had insisted on retaining paragraphs which referred only to the question of Namibia and to the legitimate needs of the Palestinian people, to the exclusion of other urgent international concerns. The basic responsibility of the Special Political Committee and the Committee on Information was to examine the operations of the Department of Public Information and to recommend policies to guide United Nations information activities in general. Selecting certain targets served no constructive purpose and only diverted attention from the proper subject of the draft resolution.

19. She reiterated her delegation's strong objections to operative paragraph 10 of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1, which stated that additional resources for DPI should be commensurate with the increase in its activities. That paragraph was an open-ended invitation to spend resources which were not available and which most Member States did not intend to make available to the Organization. Furthermore, that paragraph would only encourage the Department to ignore the need to set priorities in its work, eliminate obsolete and ineffective programmes and plan its activities in an intelligent manner. For those reasons, her delegation had voted against the two draft resolutions.

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20. Mr. EVETTS (United Kingdom) said that, in the deliberations on a new world information and communication order at UNESCO, consensus had been reached that such an order was "seen as an evolving and continuous process". Since UNESCO resolution 3.1, adopted by the General Conference at its twenty-second session, that phrase had appeared prominently in other UNESCO resolutions and in the report of the Director-General prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 38/82 A (A/39/497, para. 24). The phrase did not imply, as some had alleged, that a great deal of time would be necessary for such evolution to take place or that practical assistance for the process was not desirable. In spite of the efforts of those working for consensus, the phrase had not appeared in either of the draft resolutions just adopted by the Committee. The failure of the Committee on Information to reach consensus in 1984 had been due to difficulty on that point alone. His delegation had consequently been unable to vote for the draft resolutions.

21. On 22 November 1984, his Government had announced its intention of giving notice to withdraw from UNESCO because sufficient progress had not yet been made towards reform. While his delegation hoped that adequate progress would be made in that regard before the end of 1985, the inclusion in the two draft resolutions of a paragraph reaffirming blanket support for UNESCO gave it considerable difficulty. His Government had, together with the other members of the European Community, reaffirmed its commitment to a new world information and communication order in a joint statement before the Committee. Such an order should not, however, be a cloak for moves to strengthen control over the content of information and the freedom of expression.

22. His delegation had an additional difficulty with draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1. In an attempt to avoid politicization, the Committee on Information had eliminated the only paragraph in its recommendations dealing with a political subject. It had been reintroduced into the draft resolution, and another had been added. Since both subjects were already covered by General Assembly resolutions which some delegations had voted against and on which others had abstained, it was both redundant and contentious to include them in the draft resolution in question.

23. The statement of the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 had indicated that no additional resources would be required in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1984-1985. It was therefore strange that paragraph 10 of that resolution called for additional resources for the Department of Public Information. A similar paragraph had been deleted from the corresponding resolution in 1983, and his delegation could not support its reintroduction.

24. Ms. MAYER-SCHALBURG (Federal Republic of Germany) said that her delegation had voted against both draft resolutions just adopted. It regretted that, for the first time, it had not been possible to reach consensus on the annual so-called UNESCO resolution (A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1). It had proved impossible to accommodate a matter that had been unanimously agreed upon by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-second session, namely the definition of a new world information and communication order as an evolving and continuous process. UNESCO was the primary

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(Ms. Mayer-Schalburg, Federal  
Republic of Germany)

forum for discussion of that question, and it was not within the province of either the Committee on Information or the General Assembly to modify concepts developed by UNESCO experts.

25. Her country would continue, at least for the moment, to work from within UNESCO for reform of that organization. It did not, however, agree with all aspects of its work, and that fact was not adequately reflected either in paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 or in paragraph 12 of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1.

26. The omnibus resolution just adopted (A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1) was an example of the unwarranted politicization of substantive resolutions and the singling out of one particular political question. Her delegation could not agree to the very existence of paragraph 9 of that draft resolution, let alone to its wording. Paragraph 10 of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 recommended the allocation of additional resources to DPI. While the work of DPI was appreciated, any new activities should be carried out within existing resources.

27. A set of recommendations had been formulated by the Committee on Information which had accommodated the concerns of some delegations with regard to the questions of politicization and financial implications. Then, only one item had prevented consensus; now there were a number of such items. That unfortunate development not only jeopardized the work of UNESCO but could have serious consequences for all the work of the Committee on Information.

28. Mr. CRAANEN (Netherlands) said that his delegation had approached the negotiations in the Working Group on Questions relating to Information with a strong desire to achieve consensus. Consensus on the difficult subject of information had, in the circumstances, been even more important than previously. The Committee had managed to restore consensus on the question of the peaceful uses of outer space and his delegation had been convinced that that on the so-called UNESCO resolution could be preserved. It had, however, been lost and, paradoxically, precisely because of the consensus language of UNESCO. At the twenty-second session of the General Conference, it had been agreed by consensus that a new world information and communication order must be seen as an evolving and continuous process. That wording had been repeated in the decisions of the Executive Board of UNESCO on the programme budget for 1986-1987 and elsewhere. The concept of a new world information and communication order must therefore be seen as a process of development. His country had joined in that consensus in keeping with its firm conviction of the need for free, balanced and pluralistic information. It believed that the approach adopted by UNESCO could be productive and could open vistas for practical co-operation. Such an approach would be more productive than a normative approach whereby an attempt was made to legislate a new order into being overnight.

29. His delegation did not share the view of some delegations that to characterize a new world information and communication order as evolving and continuous was to dismantle it and postpone it indefinitely. The rate of progress towards such a new order depended on the concrete measures Member States were willing to take. His

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(Mr. Craanen, Netherlands)

country remained as sensitive as ever to the needs of the developing countries in the information and communication field and participated actively in the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). It was ironic that, in the draft resolution in question, strong support for UNESCO was being reaffirmed while, at the same time, the progress made in that organization was being ignored and the work done on defining a new order was not reflected. That work was part of the progress made towards the goal of strengthening UNESCO. If his country was critical of UNESCO, it was so in a constructive spirit. It was precisely because it saw so many positive aspects in that organization that it wished it to continue. By not endorsing the efforts of UNESCO, the Committee was doing a disservice to those endeavouring to confront its problems. The central role of UNESCO in the field of information and communication was being ignored. For those reasons, his delegation had had no alternative but to vote against the draft resolutions.

30. Mrs. PAPAJOGEJI (Albania) said that her delegation had not participated in the vote on the draft resolutions just adopted. In the discussion on agenda item 74, it had supported the efforts of the developing countries to end interference by the two super-Powers and other imperialist Powers in the information field. However, her country had reservations on a number of matters in the two draft resolutions. They contained mention of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, regarding which the position of her country was well known. That Conference had been a farce perpetrated by the two super-Powers to reinforce their spheres of influence and strengthen their grip on the continent.

31. Mr. IRTEMCELİK (Turkey) said that his delegation regretted that a more conciliatory spirit had failed to make itself evident during the consultations on the draft resolutions. It was unhappy that, while certain essential facts, major events and universal concerns had been reflected in the texts, certain others, equally important, had not been mentioned. The fact that his delegation had voted in favour of both draft resolutions must be understood as a token of its hope that a more flexible and constructive attitude would be adopted in future.

32. Miss GERVAIS (Canada) said that her delegation had abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 because it did not take account of the progress made by UNESCO in the definition of a new world information and communication order. Her delegation welcomed the conclusion contained in document A/SPC/39/L.31 that implementation of the draft resolution would not require additional resources. Paragraph 10 of the draft resolution itself, however, was in conflict with her Government's position on budgetary questions. It was regrettable that reference had been made to political questions which, while important, were outside the purview of the draft resolution.

33. Her delegation had also abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1, which had likewise taken no account of the evolution in the discussion of the question at UNESCO and made no reference to resolution 3.1 adopted by consensus at the twenty-second session of its General Conference.

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34. Mr. DUARTE COSTA (Portugal) said that his delegation had participated in the negotiations in the Working Group on Questions relating to Information in a constructive spirit. It had sincerely expressed its reservations concerning some aspects of the draft resolutions; similarly, it had noted that they contained no reference to certain matters to which it attached great importance. It appreciated the efforts made to meet some of its requirements, particularly with regard to draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1, for which it had voted.

35. His delegation had not been able to overlook the fact that the proposal to include in the draft resolution a reference to resolution 3.1 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-second session had not met with the agreement of all delegations. That resolution had been adopted by consensus and constituted an important contribution to the establishment of a new world information and communication order. His country had therefore abstained in the vote on the UNESCO resolution at the current session, while regretting the fact that no agreement had been reached in the Committee.

36. Mr. BINAH (Israel) said that his delegation had voted against both draft resolutions. It regretted that certain countries did not share Israel's interest in improving the flow and dissemination of information in free, open and pluralistic societies. Information was an expression of the human spirit; it should be disseminated freely on a universal basis and not used as a weapon in the hands of the State. He specifically objected to the third preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1 because of its authoritarian implications. Information must be free everywhere.

37. His delegation also objected to the highly politicized character of the debates and the resolutions on the subject. Draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 was parochial and unbalanced because it introduced extraneous political matters, especially in paragraph 9, which dealt with a subject which had nothing to do with information. Such a text would undermine the United Nations by turning it into a public relations office for the PLO.

38. Mr. MUTO (Japan) said that his delegation had voted against both draft resolutions and regretted that it had been impossible to adopt them by consensus. His delegation's concern was that the new world information and communication order should be regarded as an evolving process, in accordance with resolution 3.1 adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO at its twenty-second session, rather than as an established concept. His delegation objected in particular to paragraphs 13 to 15 of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1, as well as to the undesirable politicization reflected in draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1.

39. Mr. HALINEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the Nordic countries had voted in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 but had abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1. They supported the aims of both resolutions but had reservations regarding certain formulations and objected to certain omissions, especially in draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1, which failed to take into account the fact that UNESCO itself had described the new world information and communication order as an evolving process.

40. Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia) said that his delegation regretted the absence of consensus on the two draft resolutions because they dealt with matters that should be the subject not of dispute but rather of concerted international efforts. A new world information and communication order should promote the free flow and dissemination of information without government interference. Defects and shortcomings in the free flow of information and problems arising from new technology and from information monopolies must be of concern to all countries but could be corrected only if all countries co-operated to solve them in a spirit of humanistic solidarity.

41. Mr. ALMOSLECHNER (Austria) said that his delegation regretted the absence of consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1. It had felt obliged to abstain in the vote on it because it failed to mention the fact that UNESCO itself, in its resolution 3.1, had characterized the new world information and communication order as an evolving process.

42. Mr. EDON (Benin) said that his delegation had voted in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.20/Rev.1 and regretted that consensus had not been reached, despite extensive consultations. Drawing attention to paragraph 14, he said he wanted to make a minor clarification. His country had made a request, rather than a proposal, for the opening of a United Nations information centre in his country.

43. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that he hoped that those delegations which had not voted in favour of the two draft resolutions would in the future reconsider their positions in the light of the objective realities of the international situation. The Group of 77 welcomed the adoption of those resolutions as an expression of confidence in and support for the Department of Public Information. In its view, information was organically linked to development and to the rights of peoples and societies. Information must be in the service of man and not vice versa; it could not be isolated from the international situation and was crucial to the peace and welfare of mankind.

44. The Group of 77 had taken a flexible and constructive approach in the negotiations on those draft resolutions, particularly with respect to the question of Palestine, on which it had met the concerns expressed by certain delegations. It was therefore unfortunate that some delegations nevertheless objected to any mentioning of it in those draft resolutions. On the subject of UNESCO, the language used should have been acceptable to everyone, and it was unfortunate that the reaction of certain delegations had been dictated by their intention to withdraw from that organization.

45. The only obstacle to a consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.21/Rev.1 had been its failure to refer to the frequently mentioned UNESCO resolution 3.1, which referred to the new world information and communication order as an evolving process, but to cite that resolution alone would have been selective and unbalanced, and its omission had been used as a mere pretext for voting against that draft resolution.

46. Mr. DEEN (Malaysia) said that his delegation had voted in favour of both resolutions and regretted that consensus had not been reached, despite extensive consultations.

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47. Mr. MOJTAHED (Iran), Mr. EKAR (Ghana), Mr. BADJI (Senegal), Mr. MOONYANE (Lesotho) and Miss COHEN-ORANTES (Guatemala) said that their delegations would have voted in favour of both draft resolutions had they been present during the vote.

48. Mr. SOUMANU (Mali) said that his delegation had voted in favour of both draft resolutions and also wished to draw attention to the fact that his delegation would also have voted in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.34 had it been present at the 50th meeting.

#### COMPLETION OF THE COMMITTEE'S WORK

49. After an exchange of courtesies, the CHAIRMAN declared that the Committee had completed its work for the thirty-ninth session.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.