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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 12th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 22 October 2014, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Bhattarai ..... (Nepal)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 54: Questions relating to information**  
(continued) (A/69/21 and A/69/310)

1. **Mr. Pyvovarov** (Ukraine) said that information was essential to overcoming political, economic and humanitarian crises. Communication between the United Nations and the international community would always be an important tool for conveying the Organization's messages to the public. A well-coordinated public information strategy was a key element in the overall effectiveness of United Nations activities, and he commended the exemplary work of the Department of Public Information in that regard, in particular its efforts to disseminate information on the Organization promptly and to provide media support in respect of its activities. He also commended the excellent work done to host journalists during the opening week of the current session of the General Assembly.

2. Since the previous session, dangerous changes had taken place on the geopolitical map of Europe. Ukraine had been the victim of a premeditated attack by the Russian Federation, and a portion of its territory, Crimea, had been annexed, in clear violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, as part of a covert Russian military intervention. Currently, the Ukrainian army was heroically engaged in protecting the Donbas region from foreign-sponsored terrorist mercenaries who were coordinating their actions with Moscow, and it was now no secret that regular Russian troops were operating in Ukrainian territory.

3. The same scenario that had played out in Georgia and Moldova had been repeated in Crimea, and now Moscow was seeking to impose a pro-Russian terrorist puppet regime in Donbas. The conflict was causing daily suffering for thousands of Ukrainian soldiers and civilians. His Government was convinced that such a brazen policy of aggression by a formerly friendly neighbour was not only amoral but patently criminal. His delegation thanked all Member States that had supported Ukraine during the current tragic period and called on the Russian Federation to reconsider its actions.

4. A key aspect of the Russian aggression against Ukraine had been a cynical Soviet-style propaganda campaign, the likes of which had not been waged since

the cold war. On a daily basis the Russian media, carefully controlled by the Kremlin, had systematically sought to brainwash the populations of Crimea and eastern Ukraine by playing on the deep-seated cultural ties that had traditionally bound the Ukrainian and Russian peoples. Russia had revived an old strategy of meticulously structured information attacks, false information and blatant lies. The Russian media had become the laughing stock of his country and of most other States where the notion of a free press existed. The Russian media at present were nothing more than a propaganda instrument at the beck and call of the political authorities. It was also regrettable that some well-known Russian public figures, including actors, singers and journalists, had been reviled and persecuted in the media and physically harassed because they had dared to criticize the Kremlin's policies with regard to Ukraine.

5. It was telling that one of the first acts of the Russian occupiers in Crimea had been to shut down Ukrainian television and broadcast Russian television in its place. The close, even fraternal, cooperation between Russian journalists and terrorists in the Donbas region was well known. Indeed, it was they who had arrived first at the crash site of Malaysia Airlines flight 17, obtained exclusive interviews with the leaders of terrorist groups, filmed the interrogations and abusive treatment of Ukrainian soldiers held in captivity and interviewed Nadiya Savchenko, a Ukrainian political detainee who had been abducted and taken to Moscow. Moreover, it was the Russian media who had been first on the scene when the representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross had been killed by terrorists. Surely that indicated a trend.

6. Moscow had expended huge amounts of money to create a virtual reality for Russian citizens, who had no idea that it was their country that had incited a major conflict in the very heart of Europe. There were currently numerous websites where foreign journalists could find the false reports, fake images and lies put out by their Russian counterparts. Particularly cynical in that light was the traditional sponsorship by the Russian Federation of the General Assembly's draft resolution on developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security.

7. The information war was part of the undeclared war that Russia was currently waging in Ukraine. It was a form of war that belonged to the past, however. Time

could not be turned back and the Soviet Union could not be resurrected. That was his delegation's message to the Russian authorities. It demanded that the Russian Federation immediately cease its information war and restore constructive and predictable relations with Ukraine. His delegation called on Member States to ensure an adequate investigation of any attempt by one State to launch and carry out a war of information against another State and to refuse to allow the resurgence of totalitarian methods of information use typical of the cold war era. It further invited the relevant services within the United Nations to strengthen monitoring of the use of information for propaganda campaigns. Information was a powerful weapon which should only be used for the promotion of peace, mutual respect and understanding among peoples, democracy and prosperity, which were the principles underpinning the work of the United Nations.

8. **Mr. Orellana Zabalza** (Guatemala) said that consideration of the Department's public information policies and activities was important as it allowed Member States to assess the Organization's work and the progress it had made in the areas of information and outreach. Such assessments were the only way of fostering the establishment of a fair and effective global information and communication system. While his delegation recognized the value of new technologies for disseminating information on the activities of the United Nations, the digital divide that persisted between countries was a matter of concern. It was essential to preserve traditional media such as radio and the press, which remained the only sources of information in many developing countries. At the same time, it was important to promote the dissemination of information in as many languages as possible.

9. His delegation urged the Department to expand the use of social media in all official languages and highlighted the need for statistics on the use of those media. Such information was necessary to ensure the best use of resources and enable informed decision-making on the programmes to be developed and promoted. It was regrettable that the report of the Secretary-General had not included such statistics. In particular, the growing use of Spanish as a search language in the Organization's digital media should be highlighted.

10. Parity among the official languages on a basis of equity was essential. The Organization's informational structure should reflect the linguistic diversity of the

world, particularly with respect to the six official languages. His delegation hoped that the Department would take steps to close the linguistic gap in the Organization without delay. In particular, it should implement a strategy for issuing press releases in all official languages. The need for creative and efficient use of resources in the field of public information was more pressing than ever. Resources should be used equitably and in a manner that better reflected the needs of the United Nations audience.

11. **Ms. Arce Echeverría** (Costa Rica) said that freedom of expression and open, transparent and participatory communication were essential to strengthening democratic coexistence, promoting development and innovation, enhancing transparency and combating corruption. Such flows of information achieved their full potential when the rule of law was observed, human rights were respected and tolerance was practised. The United Nations and its Member States, particularly developing countries, should recognize and strengthen the role of traditional media in generating such information flows, while also taking advantage of the opportunities offered by new media and technologies, particularly for reaching young people. To bridge the digital divide, it was necessary to invest in infrastructure, facilitate access to and training in new communication tools, promote sound public policies, enhance legal certainty and participation by citizens and ensure respect for freedom of expression, in particular through the creation of institutions and the development of best practices.

12. One of the Organization's main functions was to enhance effective communication, which was essential in order to promote and reinforce the three pillars of the United Nations. The Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information had improved their cooperation in that regard. Moreover, the Department had met increasing challenges with decreasing resources through improved internal organization, coordination with other United Nations bodies, use of new technologies, and partnerships with communications media and civil society. Those challenges included connecting with new audiences without neglecting existing ones, furthering international understanding and tolerance and promoting multilingualism.

13. Progress had been made in promoting better balance in the use of the six official languages, but much remained to be done. The Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations could contribute to faster

and more constructive progress towards multilingualism. Her delegation welcomed the availability of news information in Spanish, but called for the daily press releases also to be published in all six official languages so that they could reach a wider audience.

14. **Mr. Shimizu** (Japan) said that the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations in 2015 would mark a watershed moment in the life of the Organization, which embodied a global desire to choose peace and negotiation over bloodshed and war. As it embarked upon a new chapter in its history, the Organization, and its Member States, should continue to work to ensure a more effective, efficient and future-oriented United Nations, prepared to tackle the world's most pressing challenges. The activities to be organized by the Department in celebration of the event should also be forward-looking.

15. His delegation wished to request that the permanent exhibits on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should be returned to their original locations in the General Assembly Hall and that by spring 2015 the Peace Bell should also be returned to its original location in the Japanese Garden. It was pleased that the necessary financial resources had been made available for the restoration of the Japanese Garden and was grateful to the Department for holding the Peace Bell Ceremony there each September. It looked forward to the observance of the first International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists on 2 November 2014 and called on the Department to oversee coordination of the related events and to continue to advocate for freedom of expression in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

16. His Government reaffirmed its support for the United Nations information centres. As in previous years, it had made a voluntary financial contribution to the Tokyo centre and would continue to support it in disseminating information about the important work of the United Nations to the Japanese public. The 2014 International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East, held in Tokyo in June 2014, had provided a platform to encourage discussions on media issues relating to the situation in the Middle East. It had brought together government officials, senior United Nations officials, academics, representatives of civil society and journalists to discuss the media's role in

promoting transparency and shaping perceptions of the region's most important challenges.

17. Japan also continued to encourage and support the United Nations Academic Impact initiative. In recent years the number of Japanese universities participating in the initiative had grown, a positive development that would not only strengthen the United Nations and the participating institutions, but would also contribute to the development of youth, who represented the future of the Organization.

18. The United Nations was currently called upon to confront new and dangerous threats to international peace, stability and well-being, including climate change, extremist groups and the Ebola virus, and it had to do so with increasingly limited resources. It must therefore continue to improve efficiency and transparency through the rationalization of resources. Accordingly, the Department should use strategic operations to make its activities more efficient and transparent.

19. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) said that while widespread use of social media had provided easy and rapid access to information, it had also highlighted the vulnerability of individuals, cultures, companies and societies and the need to respect confidentiality and privacy and ensure meaningful and credible content. The challenge was to transform the wealth of readily available information into a powerful tool for improvement.

20. The Department of Public Information played a pivotal role in conveying messages of international scope and fostering dialogue among multiple stakeholders and countries on a variety of issues, including the Ebola epidemic, the fight against terrorism, and the post-2015 development agenda, to name but a few. That role could be strengthened through partnerships with other departments and with the private sector, media and civil society. Her delegation commended the Department's improvement of its website and other tools and its use of both traditional media channels and social media platforms to extend the reach of United Nations communications. It also saluted the efforts of the Department's Strategic Communications Division in promoting United Nations messages and projects. Further improvement of the multilingual content of the Organization's website was needed, however, and a strategy should be implemented for delivering daily press releases in all official languages.

21. Her delegation affirmed its support for the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine and its work to raise awareness on the situation in the Middle East and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as well as the efforts towards a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It encouraged the Department to continue shedding light on the plight of the Palestinian people and the international initiative to rebuild Gaza following the Israeli military aggression of recent months.

22. The United Nations information centres, one of which was hosted by Lebanon, represented the Organization's face and voice among the peoples of the world. Their efficiency and effectiveness in conveying its messages and its purposes and principles hinged on the allocation of appropriate financial and human resources. A recent online video series entitled *The Challenge*, produced by the Public Information Office of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon in collaboration with Lebanese graduate students in journalism, had illustrated how effective media campaigns could be in raising awareness and reaching grass-roots audiences. Her delegation looked forward to furthering its cooperation with the Department through the participation of journalists in the Reham Al-Farra Memorial Journalists' Fellowship Programme and other initiatives.

23. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh), said that Bangladesh, which had lost 119 of its nationals in the service of United Nations peacekeeping operations, welcomed the observance of the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers and renewed its long-standing request to the Department to produce a publication or documentary honouring the contributions of peacekeepers from all countries. It also reiterated its proposal for the erection of a commemorative wall at United Nations Headquarters listing the names and countries of all peacekeepers who had lost their lives in the cause of global peace and stability. His delegation believed that a mindset of love, respect and tolerance was needed in order to end wars and violence; for years it had sponsored an annual resolution on a culture of peace and it encouraged the Department to support that effort.

24. Bangladesh was one of the worst victims of climate change, although its contribution to global warming was almost non-existent. Its geographical location, high population density, limited adaptive capacity and poor funding capacity made it especially vulnerable to the potentially devastating consequences

of rising sea levels, which could force millions of people from their homes. Other low-lying countries would face similar consequences. Developing countries required greater international cooperation in order to prepare themselves to deal with the consequences of global warming. His delegation sought the Department's help in drawing attention to the issue, for example through video presentations highlighting the impending crisis faced by coastal and small island States.

25. Languages and their accompanying cultural diversity were powerful instruments for preserving and developing the tangible and intangible heritage of humankind. Efforts to promote the dissemination of mother tongues would encourage linguistic diversity, multilingual education and greater awareness of different linguistic and cultural traditions, thereby helping to foster understanding and tolerance. Worldwide annual observance of International Mother Language Day, which would promote such awareness, was especially important at a time when numerous languages were threatened with extinction. He asked the Department to issue a commemorative stamp for International Mother Language Day portraying his country's Shaheed Minar monument to those who had been killed defending their right to speak Bangla.

26. His delegation was pleased that the United Nations had reinstated the Bangla radio programme discontinued in 2012; however, it called for adequate staff support to be restored as well. It recognized the contribution of the United Nations information centres to poverty eradication, awareness of youth issues, empowerment of women and sustainable development and reaffirmed its support for the work of the Department.

27. **Ms. Al-Zaabi** (United Arab Emirates) said that new media, in particular social networks, helped to strengthen links between peoples and cultures and had played a key role in bringing about major changes in the world over the past decade. It was unfortunate, however, that those new media had also been exploited by extremist and terrorist groups to misrepresent religions and peoples, instigate violence and social discord, and recruit fighters and mercenaries both within countries and across borders, constituting a threat to national and international security.

28. Certain media outlets had presented a distorted picture of the principles of Islam and had incited hatred and discrimination against Muslims. Those practices

had served as a pretext and motive for deluded young people around the world to join extremist groups, notably the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Her Government had recently passed a law which criminalized incitement to terrorist activity and was in the process of creating mechanisms to prevent the use of social media for terrorist recruitment. It was now more important than ever for the international community to draw up a comprehensive international media strategy including binding measures to prevent media services from being abused for such purposes. Such a strategy should respect the sovereignty of States and the interests of their peoples, as well as bridging the digital divide by assisting developing countries to reform their infrastructure, legislation and media systems.

29. Her delegation welcomed the efforts of the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information to raise awareness of the principles and activities of the United Nations and requested that all information services should be provided in Arabic as well as the other five official languages. To promote the message and activities of the United Nations in Arabic-speaking parts of the world, her Government had recently collaborated with the Department to fund a project to translate the book *Basic Facts about the United Nations 2014* into Arabic.

30. The Department must endeavour to report more extensively on the situation in the Middle East and in particular on the suffering of the Palestinian people at the hands of Israel, which continued to starve and kill innocent Palestinian citizens, seize their land and property and expand its settlements in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, in flagrant violation of human rights and international law.

31. International cooperation should be strengthened to broaden access to communication technologies and foster information exchange as a means of promoting peace, tolerance and harmony between civilizations.

32. **Mr. Bakayota** (Togo), noting that the report of the Secretary-General highlighted the need to raise awareness of the Organization's activities in order to mobilize support for the three pillars underpinning its work, said that it was important to target the right audience and to provide that audience with impartial, high-quality information.

33. Freedom of the press was one of the foundations of democracy and good governance. Indeed, the press was sometimes regarded as the "fourth estate" or fourth branch of government. In Africa, the emergence of a private press in the 1990s had helped to build the rule of law. In Togo, as in much of Africa, the private press was the voice of the elite, a small community of people who, thanks to their social and cultural standing, could engage in the political process, inform decision makers and address opinion leaders. In recent years, however, the press had increasingly performed a cathartic function; by adopting virulent positions against those in the opposite political camp, journalists were seeking to give voice to their indignation, convey the rancour of the masses and help to improve political, economic and social governance.

34. Despite the progress made, press freedom had diminished in the world. It had become increasingly dangerous for journalists to cover conflict zones, and millions of people lacked free access to information. In Mali, the Central African Republic and Syria numerous journalists had been killed, some of them specifically targeted for the opinions they had expressed. The safety of journalists was a reflection of the stability of the rule of law in a society. As rightly indicated in the United Nations Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, freedom of the press and access to information contributed to development. The United Nations, Governments, the media and civil society should join forces to stop the muzzling and killing of journalists and end impunity for crimes committed against them.

35. Since 2004 his Government had taken steps to improve the situation of the press, including through the adoption of laws and the allocation of financial support, leading to an increase in the numbers of private newspapers and radio and television stations. A press code adopted in 2004 had decriminalized libel and slander as offences punishable by imprisonment. In the context of press liberalization, however, there was a real risk that journalists could play a dual role as journalism professionals and advocates for political leaders. To prevent such breaches of ethics, which undermined press freedom, the Togolese Government periodically organized training sessions for journalists, who could also still be fined for libel. His delegation appealed to the international community for support in further enhancing the training and professionalism of Togolese journalists, including through professional exchanges.

36. **Mr. Zaytsev** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the Department's efforts to use the latest information technology widely and thus to increase the reach of the information it disseminated. It should also continue to use traditional means of communication given that access to digital media was not yet universal. Multilingualism must be promoted; in particular, greater use of the Russian language in United Nations activities would not only allow the widest possible audience to be reached, but would also help to preserve the cultural diversity of peoples.

37. It was evident that the information services of the United Nations managed, overall, to steer clear of the propaganda wars and campaigns launched by certain countries trying to hide the truth from the international community. The United Nations was the sole universal international organization, and its seventieth anniversary represented an opportunity to draw attention to the importance of strengthening its central role as the only available mechanism for ensuring global stability. Strict compliance with the exclusive authority of the Security Council was vital in ensuring international peace and security.

38. 2015 also marked the seventieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. Unfortunately, certain countries still viewed Nazi criminals and their collaborators as heroes — a fact that was not always denounced by so-called civilized society, even though the General Assembly adopted an annual resolution on combating the glorification of Nazism. Bearing in mind that the mission of the United Nations was to prevent new wars and that it was obligated to draw lessons from history, the Secretariat and the Department should ensure wide and active coverage of that anniversary.

39. If the work of the press had produced the kind of results to which the representative of Ukraine had alluded, the Department's efforts would have already led to a world sharing the ideals and values of the United Nations. The Organization was being used as a platform for inappropriate propaganda attacks. Unlike other Governments, which had supported the illegal change of government in Ukraine, leading to chaos and a host of bloody events, the Russian Federation had, from the beginning, supported the peaceful settlement of differences and political dialogue, and had significantly contributed to the fragile truce established by the Minsk protocol. According to a report from Human Rights Watch, the Ukrainian military had used

cluster ammunition in densely populated areas of Donetsk after the signing of the protocol. It was as if the Kyiv authorities were doing everything in their power to impede a national reconciliation by denying political, civil and cultural rights to a significant part of the population. Banning the use of those people's native language, expelling representatives of the regions from government bodies and using illegitimate militarized groups not part of any law enforcement agencies went against the European principles asserted by the Kyiv authorities. To cap their cynical propaganda, they had branded as terrorists all eastern Ukrainians who did not agree with their politics. The aggressive infringement of the rights of the people of Crimea had forced them to take their destiny into their own hands and freely choose self-determination. To date, there had been no investigation of the sniper shootings in the Maidan and the mass casualties in Odessa and other Ukrainian cities. No one had been held responsible for the mass graves discovered in Donetsk. The investigation into the shooting down of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 had lost momentum. It would be unusual if a population subject to expulsion and killings did not decide to protect itself. Accusing the Russian Federation under those conditions was inappropriate, inaccurate and unconstructive.

40. **Mr. Adam** (Sudan) said that the media not only provided the means of keeping pace with the rapidly changing modern world but could also have a decisive influence, for better or worse, on politics, the economy, society and security. It was therefore necessary to create objective, balanced media services that promoted tolerance and dialogue and sought solutions to problems, rather than descending into dishonest, retaliatory tactics. The Department of Public Information had a key role to play in disseminating information on the values and activities of the Organization and must endeavour to provide complete, balanced and transparent coverage of world events.

41. His delegation commended the work of the Department, calling on it to promote international cooperation and set exemplary standards in all of its written, audio and video content. All media outlets and institutions were encouraged to strive for accuracy, seek the truth and adhere to standards of professional ethics at all times, especially given that providing incorrect information could have irreversible consequences, for example by sparking discord and even leading to loss of life. It was also necessary to

bridge the digital divide between developed and developing countries in order to reduce social and economic inequalities, prevent conflicts and promote a culture of peace.

42. **Mr. Ghirani** (Libya) said that the Department performed a pivotal task in raising awareness of the goals, principles and activities of the Organization, and the challenges facing the international community, through various media, in collaboration with partners and coordination with other United Nations departments. Great attention must be paid to the substance of the information disseminated, since peace must be created in the mind before it could be achieved in reality; the Department and the Committee on Information must therefore denounce violence and hatred and encourage intercultural dialogue and cooperation to tackle the challenges of the modern world and advance the universal aims of the United Nations. Bridging the digital divide was also a priority; developing countries must be provided with assistance tailored to their needs, including capacity-building and training in traditional media and modern communications technology.

43. It was particularly important to achieve parity between the official languages of the Organization throughout all of the Department's activities. His delegation commended the partnerships established by the Department with other United Nations entities including the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs and the training programme for Palestinian journalists and encouraged it to increase its efforts to report on the suffering of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation.

44. **Mr. Suárez Moreno** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his country advocated the establishment of a new, more just and effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information. While progress had been made in creating alternative media, much remained to be done in order to achieve a more inclusive and democratic information society. The large media corporations continued to play a dominant role, hindering the dissemination of objective information. In that regard, his delegation rejected the presentation of discriminatory and distorted information on events occurring in developing countries.

45. At the national level, his Government was promoting the establishment of alternative community media with the aim of democratizing access to information. It viewed the media as a valuable resource for promoting social justice, cultural diversity, inclusiveness and solidarity among peoples and attached particular importance to eliminating the digital divide separating developed and developing countries. Capacity-building was crucial for that purpose.

46. An inclusive, people-centred and development-oriented information society could contribute both to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Information and communication technology (ICT) could be an important tool in strengthening educational processes. His Government had therefore instituted a programme to supply computers in the country's schools, equip them with an Internet connection and provide training in the effective use of such technologies.

47. His delegation wished to express its concern about the inappropriate use of ICTs for the purpose of interfering in the domestic affairs of States, destabilizing those States and violating the human rights of their citizens, particularly the right to privacy. Such actions contravened the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. ICTs should be used for the promotion of peace, sustainable development, cooperation and human rights.

48. Lastly, the Department should continue striving to enhance its dissemination of information on the activities of and results achieved by the United Nations. Its work would be strengthened if messages were transmitted in all six official languages.

49. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the provision of accurate, impartial, comprehensive, timely and relevant information to the widest possible audiences was essential to garnering the support of the international community for the activities of the United Nations. His delegation emphasized the role of the Department in achieving that goal and the contribution of the Committee on Information in evaluating the Department's efforts.

50. All acts of intolerance, extremism, intimidation, violence and terrorism should be brought to the attention of the international community, in an



impartial manner, with the aim of combating their root causes. Member States had a duty to assist the United Nations in that important mission. In that connection, the Iranian President, in his statement at the opening of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly, had called for a “World Against Violence and Extremism (WAVE)” under the leadership of the United Nations, warning that extremism could seriously endanger international peace and security. Less than a year later, violent extremism of the worst kind had manifested itself in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Iraq. The emergence of ISIL clearly indicated that the initiative of the Iranian President was timely and valid and deserved more attention in the public information policies and activities of the United Nations. While his delegation appreciated the Department’s cooperation in holding a seminar on the matter in Tehran in February 2014, it expected further effort from the Department to promote the idea of a world against violence and extremism, including the holding of a seminar at United Nations Headquarters, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 68/127 and draft resolution B contained in document [A/69/21](#).

51. It was a matter of concern to developing countries that the public information and communication gap between developed and developing countries continued to widen. His delegation fully supported a just order based on the free, balanced and transparent flow of information and strongly condemned measures by some countries to ban the broadcasting of satellite television and radio channels, since that constituted a gross violation of international law and also a flagrant contradiction of claims about defending the freedoms of speech and of the press. It urged the Department to continue its efforts to encourage and facilitate dialogue among civilizations and to promote that concept in the activities of the United Nations in various fields, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

52. His delegation wished to draw attention to the serious deterioration of the humanitarian and economic situation of the Palestinian people and to underscore the responsibility of the United Nations in raising international awareness regarding the question of Palestine, including the negative impact of the recent aggression against Gaza and the continued illegitimate occupation on the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

53. The United Nations information centres, particularly those in developing countries, played a crucial role in disseminating the message of the United Nations and enhancing its public image. They should therefore be strengthened, including through the provision of the latest technical equipment. His delegation supported the emergence of a more linguistically equal world, in which information was disseminated not only in the official languages of the United Nations, but also in local languages, such as Persian, that were widely regarded as the roots of great cultures and civilizations. It welcomed the Department’s continued awarding of the Reham Al-Farra Fellowship to broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and hoped that consideration would be given to extending the duration of the Fellowship and increasing the number of participants.

54. **Ms. Richards** (Jamaica) said that her Government’s national development agenda placed special emphasis on the expansion of ICTs as a key enabler of growth and development. Numerous Internet access points throughout the country gave citizens access to the Internet at minimal or no cost and facilitated research, communication, education, business and social networking. Tablet computers had been distributed in schools to enhance students’ educational development and technology skills and expose them to cultures and opportunities in the world at large.

55. Her delegation therefore welcomed the Department’s use of ICTs and social media in order to reach a wider audience. It was clear from the Secretary-General’s report that those efforts had borne fruit. Particularly commendable were the Department’s efforts to highlight the work of the United Nations and extend its outreach in relation to climate change, the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda — key issues requiring global engagement and action.

56. Her delegation appreciated the Department’s work in the context of the International Year of Small Island Developing States and encouraged it to continue drawing attention to the concerns of such States and promoting support for their development efforts. It was also pleased with the Department’s commemorative efforts in relation to other international events, particularly those undertaken to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade in 2014. The availability of media materials in various languages had doubtless

served to raise awareness of that important initiative. Her delegation would soon introduce the General Assembly's annual resolution concerning the permanent memorial to the victims of slavery, now under construction. The resolution called for an increased focus on the issue of transatlantic slavery, including through the annual observance of the International Day of Remembrance, and her delegation looked forward to the Department's continued support and assistance in that regard.

57. The United Nations information centres remained invaluable sources of knowledge and information, especially for small countries such as hers and, in particular, for rural communities. She was therefore concerned that the post of Director of the United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean Area remained vacant three years following the end of the tenure of the previous incumbent, and hoped that the matter would be resolved quickly.

58. **Ms. Sughayar** (Jordan) said that the United Nations had a responsibility to disseminate information to all nations and peoples around the world, irrespective of their language, colour or religion. It should represent the concerns and interests of all States, whether rich or poor, developed or developing. Information played a crucial role not only in international relations and inter-State communication, but also in sustainable development and economic growth, poverty reduction, improvement of health conditions, empowerment of women and youth, dispute settlement and increased awareness of human rights. Certain principles, such as the free flow of information at all levels and the right of all peoples to free access to information, should be guaranteed. To enable people to enjoy the right to seek and receive information, as enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations should extend assistance to developing countries to enhance their communication capabilities and technology, including through training programmes for journalists and the establishment of additional information centres in new areas.

59. The Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information should continue to play the important role of providing adequate, unbiased information. The Department must work with local and international media to ensure diversity of media sources and provide information free from intervention by certain States and individuals. While terrorist groups sought to promote a culture of violence and

extremism, information circulated by the United Nations could counter such efforts by promoting a culture of peace, tolerance and coexistence.

60. Jordan was proactively advocating an inclusive and ambitious post-2015 development agenda that included the issues of access to information and freedom of expression. It considered the right to seek and access information to be of fundamental importance in promoting a democratic society and free, independent and effective media, and it had taken significant steps to facilitate access to information, having been the first Arab country to enact a law on the matter. Her delegation urged the United Nations to continue to provide independent, comprehensive, timely and transparent information to the international community.

61. **Mr. Vallarino** (Argentina) said that his delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to develop new content using new technologies, but without neglecting traditional media in order to avoid exacerbating injustices arising from the gap between developing and developed countries. Argentina continued to support the vital work of the United Nations information centres in disseminating the message of the United Nations, in particular that of the centre in Buenos Aires, which served as the Organization's voice in Spanish in Argentina and Uruguay.

62. His delegation, like the Department of Public Information, understood the importance of communicating with people in their own language and strongly supported multilingualism as a principle inherent in the existence of the United Nations. It was therefore deeply concerned that the report of the Secretary-General lacked detailed information on the subject, particularly as it had been acknowledged that the goal of language parity had yet to be achieved. Disaggregated statistics on the use of languages in the Department's various products and services were needed in order to reveal trends in language use by the public, identify needs and design tools to meet those needs. The Department's provision of live webcasts of General Assembly and Security Council meetings in all six official languages plus the language of the speaker represented a major step forward. However, as called for in paragraph 72 of draft resolution B in document [A/69/21](#), archived videos of meetings should also be made available in the six official languages.

63. While it was gratifying to see the rising numbers of users accessing the Organization's website and

social media networks in Spanish, it was a matter of serious concern that there was still much less web page content available in Spanish than in English. His delegation therefore urged the Department to better adapt the linguistic content of its products to current public demand. The lack of progress in issuing press releases in all official languages was also a concern. They continued to be published in only two languages, although the Department had been mandated to design a strategy to deliver daily press releases in all six languages.

64. The General Assembly had clearly stated that there should be an equitable distribution of existing resources in the interests of achieving multilingualism and ensuring parity among the six official languages. It was therefore a matter of concern that the content of the Secretary-General's report might cause that mandate to be interpreted in a way that gave precedence to some official languages over others for budgetary reasons. The Department must adhere to the principle of linguistic parity when using the budget resources allocated to it to carry out its mandate, which obviously included the issuance of daily press releases. The necessary changes should be made to redistribute existing resources in an equitable manner; that would occur naturally if they were distributed in line with actual public demand.

65. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation appreciated the efforts of the Department to implement many important information programmes, in particular the special information programme on the question of Palestine, which was instrumental in raising international awareness of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as part of efforts to reach a just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

66. She further commended the Department, especially its Palestine, Decolonization and Human Rights Section, for organizing the annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East; for updating the permanent exhibit on the question of Palestine at United Nations Headquarters; and for its activities in commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and the current International Year of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

67. It was important for the Department to continue providing assistance to Palestinian broadcasters and

journalists through its annual training programme. In line with General Assembly resolutions, the Department should expand the collection of audiovisual materials on the question of Palestine and the organization and promotion of fact-finding news missions to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to Israel. Those activities required sufficient funding if they were to be fully implemented.

68. Unfortunately, Israeli forces and settlers continued to systematically target Palestinian journalists and media outlets in a bid to prevent them from reporting on Israel's illegal practices. During the brutal attacks carried out by Israel on the Gaza Strip in August 2014, over 2,180 Palestinians, including 18 journalists, had been killed and more than 11,000 people had been injured, many of them journalists and broadcasters.

69. Israel continued to suppress freedom of expression through an ongoing campaign of arrests and use of excessive force, brazenly flouting its obligations under United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 68/163 on the safety of journalists. Her delegation therefore reiterated its call to the Committee and relevant international organizations to step up their efforts to protect Palestinian and foreign journalists and to demand a halt to Israel's violations of international law.

70. **Mr. Pyvovarov** (Ukraine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, as one of the founding Members of the United Nations, Ukraine was aware what the platform of the United Nations was for. It was using it at the current meeting to inform the public of the duplicitous and hypocritical policies put into play by the Russian Federation against a country alongside which it had fought fascism. The Russian Federation had behaved treacherously, taking advantage of a political crisis and an uprising against a pro-Russian dictatorship by stealing part of a sovereign State and thus shocking the entire world.

71. The current situation was not a question of self-determination. The international community had seen how the Russian Federation had responded to the Chechen Republic's call for independence: three wars and tens of thousands of lives lost were testament to that. There would not have been a crisis in eastern Ukraine if it had not been for the Russian-sponsored and trained guerrilla forces operating there.

72. Ukraine made a clear distinction between its citizens and terrorists with Russian passports and the latest Russian-made weapons. He was surprised that the representative of the Russian Federation had referred to a report by Human Rights Watch, given the Russian Government's usual attitude towards foreign non-governmental organizations, especially human rights organizations. As stated by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, that report had been based on unverified information and the organization's employees had been deliberately misled. Ukraine had never used and would never use banned weapons.

73. The investigation into the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 was on schedule and its findings would be made public. It was being complicated by the fact that the crash site was still controlled by pro-Russian terrorists who did not allow international experts to gain access. All the crimes perpetrated by the previous criminal regime were being duly investigated. Moreover, Ukraine was still awaiting an explanation from the Russian Federation regarding the justification for its continued detention of Ukrainian political prisoners. The only thing that the Russian Federation could do to help Ukraine at present was to withdraw immediately from internationally recognized Ukrainian territory and accept that it would never be able to recreate the Soviet Union.

74. **Mr. Nitzan** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, once again, the remarks of the Palestinian delegate served only to inflame hostilities towards Israel. That was not surprising, however, since the official media under the Palestinian Authority were merely a tool for fuelling incitement and intolerance and glorifying terrorism, which led to the murder of Israelis. Delegations were accustomed to hearing the Palestinians' selective descriptions of the situation in Israel, but they never heard a word from them about the situation in Gaza, where Hamas systematically violated media freedom, and threatened or even killed journalists. Unsurprisingly too, the Palestinian Authority often cracked down on the media because it did not want the outside world, especially international donors, to hear about its financial corruption or systematic human rights violations.

*The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.*