

55. In conclusion, she underlined once again that her delegation sought only to promote and protect the rights of minorities as provided for in international treaties and agreements, and that Yugoslavia had always been motivated by the desire to develop understanding, co-operation and friendly relations between nations, thus contributing to world peace.

56. Mr. TUERK (Austria) said that Austria had always been conscious of the concerns of Yugoslavia in connexion with minority problems and that the Austrian Government was therefore astonished by the accusations levelled against it by Yugoslavia, accusations which in its view were totally unfounded. All Austrian citizens enjoyed equal rights under the provisions of the Austrian Federal Constitution, and the Government had taken measures to implement article 7 of the State Treaty, which reaffirmed those rights and set forth specific minority rights. The Austrian Government had informed the Government of Yugoslavia of those measures in a note delivered to it on 2 December 1974.

57. He emphasized that the minorities had every opportunity to participate in the cultural and social activities and the economic life of Austria, on a completely equal footing with other Austrian citizens, and that their organizations received financial subsidies. The measures taken by Austria to implement article 7 of the State Treaty even went beyond the provisions of that article. Co-operation between Austria and Yugoslavia had hitherto proved to be a valuable contribution to détente in Europe, and the Austrian Federal Government was convinced that only a constructive discussion of the various problems between the two Governments would make it possible to settle them. That was what it had proposed to the Government of Yugoslavia in the above-mentioned note; it was currently awaiting proposals on the matter.

58. Miss ILIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that for the time being she was unable to provide the representative of Austria with any information on that point.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.

2109th meeting

Thursday, 5 December 1974, at 3.30 p.m.

Chairman: Mrs. Aminata MARICO (Mali).

A/C.3/SR.2109

In the absence of the Chairman, Miss Dubra (Uruguay), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 56

Human rights and scientific and technological developments: report of the Secretary-General (concluded) (A/9645, A/C.3/L.2143/Rev.1)

1. At the request of Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) the CHAIRMAN put draft resolution A/C.3/L.2143/Rev.1 to the vote.

Draft resolution A/C.3/L.2143/Rev.1 as orally amended was adopted by 86 votes to none, with 8 abstentions.

AGENDA ITEM 57

Freedom of information (A/9657):

- (a) **Draft Declaration on Freedom of Information;**
(b) **Draft Convention on Freedom of Information**

2. Mr. SCHREIBER (Director, Division of Human Rights), introducing the item, recalled that the General Assembly had interested itself in freedom of information since the beginning of the Organization's activities. As early as 1946, the Assembly, in its resolution 59 (I), had called a Conference on freedom of information, which had met in 1948. Three draft conventions had resulted from that Conference, one on the gathering and international transmission of news, the second, on the establishment of an international right of correction and the third on freedom

of information. At its third session, in 1949, the General Assembly approved the Draft Convention on the International Transmission of News and the Right to Correction, the articles of which had been drawn from the first two draft conventions resulting from the Conference. It was decided not to open that Convention for signature until such time as a final decision had been taken with regard to the draft convention on freedom of information (see resolutions 277 A and C (III)). At its seventh session, in 1952, the Assembly adopted as a separated instrument the articles relating to the right to correction of the Draft Convention on the International Transmission of News and the Right to Correction, and opened it for signature. The Convention on the International Right to Correction (resolution 630 (VII), annex) entered into force in 1962.

3. So far, the General Assembly had not been in a position to take a final decision on the third draft convention, concerning freedom of information. At the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth sessions of the General Assembly, the Committee had drawn up and adopted a preamble and four articles¹ on the basis of a new draft convention submitted by a committee established for that purpose by the General Assembly in 1950. For its part, the Economic and Social Council had in 1959 and 1960 prepared a draft declaration (Economic and Social Council resolution 756 (XXIX), annex) on which the General Assembly had yet to make a decision. At its twenty-eighth session, the Assembly had decided to inscribe the question of the

¹ See A/8340, annex I. For articles 5-19 of the draft convention, see annex II.

freedom of information on the agenda of its twenty-ninth session.

Mrs. Marico (Mali) took the Chair.

4. Mrs. DE ALBA (Dominican Republic) said that her delegation took great interest in the question under consideration. It considered, to use the words of General Assembly resolution 59 (I), that freedom of information was a fundamental human right and was the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations was consecrated. Every human being had the right to be informed, just as everyone had the right to express himself freely. Everyone had the right to seek and to disseminate the truth. The free exchange of ideas could only contribute to the cultural, social and economic development of all countries; it encouraged the maintenance of friendly relations by making it possible to clear up misunderstandings. However, like any other right, that right was accompanied by duties and responsibilities. Articles 2 and 5 of the draft convention dealt with that aspect. Unfortunately, since 1946, when the General Assembly had first dealt with the question, it had been able to adopt only the preamble and a few articles of the draft convention, and had not been able to take any decision on the draft declaration submitted by the Economic and Social Council. Her delegation felt that it would nevertheless be useful that there should be a legal foundation for supporting and defending the concept of freedom of information. There were countries in which that right was not recognized, and even those in which freedom of information did exist might benefit from instruments that enabled them to guide and direct that freedom in the general interest. Her delegation therefore hoped that the item would again be included in the agenda of the thirtieth session of the General Assembly so that members of the Committee might have time to consider the draft convention and the Economic and Social Council's draft declaration at their leisure and be in a position to submit final texts to the General Assembly.

5. Mr. VON STAUFFENBERG (Federal Republic of Germany) said that it would be a mistake to think that because the item under consideration had been debated by the General Assembly for many years it was a mere routine matter. Quite the contrary, it was a problem of the utmost importance, for freedom of information was an important factor for understanding among nations. As far back as 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had proclaimed that everyone had the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The Federal Republic of Germany applied that principle and had incorporated it in its basic law of 1949. In addition, in December 1973 it had ratified the two International Covenants on human rights (General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex) which also recognized that right. The Federal Republic of Germany was convinced that in a world that had shrunk in size, as a result of advances in communications, exchange of information could only contribute to drawing nations closer together. It was difficult to imagine that in the contemporary world, in which countries were increasingly interdependent economically, some could remain isolated from the rest of mankind as far as information was concerned.

6. In addition, the impact of very rapid technological progress was being felt in the life of the individual, who, as

the world underwent fundamental changes, was receding into the background. His delegation was convinced that freedom of information could only contribute to strengthening the protection of the individual. Freedom of thought, which was one of the basic principles of the Federal Republic of Germany, could have no meaning without freedom of expression. Freedom of expression implied, for the individual, a critical and responsible spirit and that was possible only when the individual had free access to information, access across national frontiers. The Committee should strive, in the resolutions it adopted on the item, to ensure that the principle of freedom of information proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights did not remain an empty clause.

7. It had been recognized within the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe that freedom of information made it possible to improve human contacts and that a free exchange of ideas across frontiers was an important element of détente. Despite the differences of views that existed between the participants in that Conference, they were trying to work out criteria for conduct which should improve communication between the citizens of their countries. If the Conference achieved its goal, and there was reason to hope it would, there would be a basis for further détente in Europe. The negotiations in Geneva would probably also have a favourable impact on future discussions in the United Nations on the item.

8. His Government was conscious of the difficulties which had emerged in formulating a draft convention. The adoption of a declaration reflecting a broad consensus on the principle of freedom of information might be sufficient for the moment, as a first step towards giving substance to the principle proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations. The Federal Republic of Germany, for its part, was prepared to do all in its power to make that a reality.

9. Mr. SEGEL (United States of America) said that it was regrettable that, although the General Assembly had decided in resolutions 2448 (XXIII) and 2722 (XXV) to give priority to consideration of the draft declaration on freedom of information, the item had been postponed time and again without any decision being taken. The Committee had again not had time during the current session to consider that very important matter, which affected the citizens of every country, and it would no doubt be obliged to postpone it to the thirtieth session of the General Assembly.

10. His delegation supported the draft declaration as it stood. As the declaration had been drawn up 15 years earlier, it might be useful to go over its content for the benefit of States which had not become Members of the United Nations in 1959 and were not familiar with the text.

11. The preamble started by citing article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and went on to establish the relationship between freedom of information and the maintenance of world peace. It was, indeed, the free flow of information among States that made it possible to develop understanding among peoples, and that led to co-operation and even peaceful competition.

12. Article 1 of the draft declaration dealt with the individual's right to freedom of information, and article 2 with the responsibility of Governments to disseminate information both within and outside their frontiers. Article 3 dealt with the need for the information media to be independent of Governments in order to ensure that individuals had free access to sources of information. Article 4 dealt with the responsibilities and duties of the information media in connexion with the accuracy of the facts reported and respect for the rights and dignity of nations and individuals. Finally, article 5 defined the acceptable limitations on freedom of information in certain very specific cases.

13. The freedom of the press was a firmly established principle in the United States and had repeatedly made it possible for corruption to be revealed and fundamental liberties to be protected. The United States was therefore convinced that the passage of the draft Declaration by the United Nations would be of value to all mankind.

14. His delegation would continue to work within the Committee to achieve that goal.

15. Mr. COMMENAY (France) said that, as far as the item under consideration was concerned, United Nations representatives and experts could not, for once, be accused of contributing to the gross inflation of international law by being over-productive. The General Assembly had had the item before it since its first session, in 1946, and the draft convention and draft declaration on freedom of information had been under consideration for 23 and 15 years respectively. In the present case, the situation could be summed up in the title of a report by the International Press Institute: "The United Nations talks a lot and does little".

16. The conclusion should not be drawn that the subject, which had been considered of prime importance immediately after the Second World War, had become less important; quite the contrary. However, as a result of progress in technology, the concept of freedom of information had replaced the more traditional concept of freedom of the press, and article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights referred to freedom of information. The Convention on the International Right of Correction, which had entered into force in 1962, defined an information agency and described quite clearly what the field of information comprised. The development of new information media, particularly the prodigious success of radio and later of television, had fundamentally altered the context in which the problem was posed by creating or intensifying competition between news media and giving rise to new ways to cross frontiers, thus reaching an increasingly varied and numerous audience. At the same time, the number of national agencies had rapidly increased. Progress had been made towards freedom of information, particularly through a proliferation of bilateral agreements, but it appeared that still further progress could be made in that regard.

17. Freedom of information was subjected to factual and legal conditions. Competition, which alone enabled the individual to have at his disposal several points of reference and to make comparisons, obviously had to be dispensed

with in regions where funds were limited. But competition could also be restricted in countries with a high standard of living, as a result either of the normal operation of economic mechanisms or of political and social organization. Thus, a crisis had arisen in the press in recent years, for instance in France and the United Kingdom, and even in the United States. Yet the press was the supreme information medium, because it was in written form and the reader could ponder over it. That was a subject of concern in Europe, where many experts felt that the State should save the press by subsidizing it or giving it preferential tax treatment.

18. Thus, the operation of economic forces alone could impede freedom of information. Furthermore, freedom of information was always subject to legal conditions; in other words, it was largely dependent on the willingness of States to make it a reality and to protect it through an adequate institutional system. It was not necessary to reopen the old debate on the objectivity of information. It sufficed to consider that freedom of information, which was the natural extension of freedom of expression and freedom of opinion, implied the right of every individual to form his own opinion on matters of interest to him by having the fullest possible knowledge of facts and ideas concerning them. To that end, the individual must have at his disposal, wherever possible, several sources of information as well as the freedom to seek, receive or impart information or opinions regardless of frontiers. Finally, he must be able to express his opinion without pressure or constraint. The question was how that theory was to be put into practice. There were not only the economic difficulties he had referred to but other difficulties of a legal nature, because freedom of information, like any freedom, was subject to limits arising from the need to protect the rights of the State, the rights of the national and international community and the rights of groups and individuals.

19. Protection of the rights of the State, often embodied in the concepts of national security and public policy, was an idea which could vary according to circumstances, particularly in time of war, when special restrictions were necessary. Yet even in periods of calm, there were restrictions. Protection of the moral and spiritual interests of the international community was one of the most delicate tasks involved. Since such protection depended on the political, economic, social and cultural context in which it was afforded, it could take very different forms and could differ very widely in extent. During the previous debates on the item, some representatives had produced a whole list of excesses of which the press and other information media could be accused; such as incitement to violence, encouragement of licentiousness and attacks on the founders of religions. Care must be taken not to criticize everything as a matter of course, and such criticisms and the very existence of the wrongs which they denounced would seem to be evidence of freedom of information. However, freedom did not mean licence, and it should be remembered that every right had, as its corollary, a duty. Although protection of the international community in that respect might not seem to be an urgent necessity, it would be desirable to attend to it if peaceful relations were to be maintained between peoples, because States must counter the dissemination of any false or distorted news which might offend national dignity or

engender hatred or prejudice against other States or against persons or groups of different race, language, religion or philosophic beliefs. Freedom of information was also subject to restrictions resulting from respect for the rights, honour and reputation of others. It was important that the right of reply, which was a corollary of freedom of information, should be guaranteed at both the international and the national levels in order to protect individuals, organizations or the community against possible abuse by the information media.

20. Since February 1951, his delegation had frequently reiterated its support for the principle of a convention. It had taken part whole-heartedly in the work to develop and improve the draft. However, before it could be adopted, the text must be subjected to further study, with particular reference to the following: protection of the diversity of sources of information and means of expression, drafting of more precise provisions concerning the rules of professional ethics, strengthening of the concept of the right of reply, more precise consideration of the list of restrictions, and review of the provisions concerning entry into the territory of a State in which a specialized agency was situated with a view to bringing them into line with the rules in force in New York. His delegation already found many articles acceptable, but a sufficient number of States must be prepared to approve them.

21. His delegation had also taken part in the work on the draft declaration since April 1959. With the exception of the text on the right of correction, which it felt should be amended, his delegation found the draft submitted to the Committee acceptable and useful, in that it laid down certain general principles on which the Convention on Freedom of Information could be based. Unfortunately, the session seemed to be too far advanced to allow detailed discussion of the text of the draft convention.

22. The Assembly should, at the least, request the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary organs to show greater diligence in studying the problem, so that progress could be made on the draft before the thirtieth session. Where the draft declaration was concerned, the Economic and Social Council should be entrusted with the task of making the necessary adjustments so that the final text could be approved, unanimously if possible, at the thirtieth session. The Third Committee should also take the initiative, at the current session, of appealing to all States to ratify the Convention on the International Right of Correction. Only a dozen countries had ratified it since 1952. It would be helpful if the Secretariat could inform the Committee of the most recent status of the question. Finally, of course, a request must be made to include the item in the agenda of the thirtieth session, and it might be well to assign higher priority to it forthwith, so that more time could be spent on its discussion.

23. Mrs. TAKLA (Egypt) said that Egypt had reorganized its information system in 1973 in order to make it more effective and to ensure the dissemination of information in a way which would meet the aspirations of the population. In that connexion, it had acted as host for two seminars on information in which Arab and non-Arab countries had participated. In addition, a regional centre for information studies had been established for the Arab countries.

24. Freedom of information did not mean simply eliminating censorship. It implied a choice between two solutions. Frequently, however, such a choice did not even exist, because information was sometimes difficult to obtain, too expensive or not objective. A study of the mass media carried out by UNESCO showed that in a number of countries the minimum information standards established with regard to the number of radio and television stations and the number of copies of newspapers available in relation to the number of inhabitants had not been attained. In some regions, mass media in the traditional sense of the term were actually unknown, and 32 million people around the world received no information at all. The cost of acquiring information was also sometimes too high. The UNESCO study had indicated that the cost of retransmitting information varied greatly by country and by continent. Egypt felt that the United Nations, and UNESCO in particular, had an important role to play in that area, perhaps by establishing a United Nations international press agency.

25. In considering that problem, account should also be taken of the problems presented by advances in communication technology. Thus, it was possible at the present time to build very powerful satellites which could even be equipped with nuclear reactors in the years to come, but that possibility existed only for the developed countries, which had the financial means to acquire such satellites. Again, in the retransmission of information, account must be taken of the individual culture of each country, particularly of the under-developed countries.

26. The draft declaration and draft convention on freedom of information could meet certain needs in that field; however, the essential thing was to create in each country a propitious climate for international co-operation and, by means of well-conceived information, to place international relations on a firm foundation.

27. Lady GAITSKELL (United Kingdom) said that, throughout the years that the item on freedom of information had been included in the agenda of the Third Committee, it had given rise to differing views. Some countries, like the United Kingdom, felt that everyone should have free access to all kinds of information, whatever its nature and its source; others believed that information should be very strictly controlled. The supporters of the latter viewpoint often justified it by invoking the principle of respect for the sovereignty of States and the right of a Government to prevent the free flow of information when it might be prejudicial to the interests of the State. There could, however, be a conflict of interest between the sovereignty of States and the basic human rights of the individuals of a State.

28. One of the most outstanding achievements of the United Nations had been the adoption of international instruments which recognized and evaluated the basic human rights of the individual. The right to freedom of information was set forth explicitly in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Although the exercise of that right might in certain cases be subject to restrictions, as was clear from article 19, paragraph 3, of the International Covenant, it was nevertheless difficult to

justify the extent of the restrictions which were still placed by some States on freedom of information and freedom of expression. Her delegation believed that those restrictions should be invoked only in particular circumstances for the most compelling reasons, for without freedom of information a democratic society could not flourish.

29. That was the reason why her delegation attached great importance to the negotiations currently taking place at Geneva regarding the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The United Kingdom had a long tradition of cultural exchange with its partners in the European Economic Community and other countries in Europe and was seeking to strengthen further its cultural links with the countries of Eastern Europe in order to promote the exchange of information and ideas.

30. It was in that spirit that the members of the Committee should continue to consider the question of freedom of information, which was one of humanity's spiritual freedoms. Freedom of information could not only serve to expose corruption and subjection wherever they existed but could also help to strengthen friendship and co-operation among States and to ensure peace in the world.

31. Mr. NOTHOMB (Belgium) expressed regret that the question of freedom of information, which had been included in the Committee's agenda for many years, was only being considered very hastily at the close of the session. Freedom of opinion and expression, which were solemnly proclaimed in the Belgian Constitution, was one of the pillars of Belgium's democratic system, and freedom of information was essential to respect for other human rights and fundamental freedoms. As was stated in the draft declaration recommended by the Economic and Social Council, freedom of information played an important role both in the establishment of peaceful and friendly relations among peoples and nations and in the development of international peace and understanding. The question of the free flow of information affected the fundamental right of every individual to have free access to information, whatever its source and its nature. Information should be at the service of the public, and the right to information should be exercised in conformity with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

32. In view of the importance of the question, he found it deplorable that the Committee had not had time to continue its consideration of the 15 articles of the draft convention on freedom of information which had not yet been adopted. He hoped that the question of freedom of information would be considered at an earlier stage in the thirtieth session and that the draft declaration on freedom of information would be considered with sufficient thoroughness by the Economic and Social Council for it to be adopted unanimously by the General Assembly at its thirtieth session.

33. Mrs. WATANABE (Japan) recalled General Assembly resolution 59 (I), in which it had affirmed that freedom of information was a fundamental right and was the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations was consecrated and had invited all Members of the United Nations to a conference on freedom of information. Since

the adoption of that resolution, the General Assembly had had before it in 1959 the draft convention on freedom of information and in 1960 the draft declaration on freedom of information, recommended by the Economic and Social Council at its twenty-ninth session in resolution 756 (XXIX).

34. Her delegation believed that the United Nations should make every possible effort to take concrete action on the question of freedom of information, consideration of which had remained pending for too many years. The effectiveness of the Organization's work depended to a great extent on the mass media—the press, radio and television—which enabled it to keep peoples throughout the world informed of its activities and to give them an understanding of its objectives. It was clear that the United Nations could not function as it wished without the assistance of information media of all types throughout the world. In its resolution 1805 (LV), the Economic and Social Council had appealed to world public opinion and information media to encourage and support prompt and effective action by Governments to maintain world peace. In view of the mutual benefits which the United Nations and the information media derived from their co-operation, her delegation believed that the United Nations, for its part, should intensify its efforts to guarantee and protect freedom of information.

35. Japan had no difficulty in supporting the draft declaration on freedom of information. The canons of journalism adopted in 1946 in Japan by the Japanese Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association stipulated that the right to freedom of the press should be upheld as a fundamental human right. Japan believed, however, that the draft declaration should be reviewed, article by article if necessary, before the final version was approved, in view of the many years which had elapsed since its adoption by the Economic and Social Council.

36. Mr. BALOCH (Pakistan) said that his country's position on the draft declaration and draft convention on freedom of information was well known. He found it regrettable that the Third Committee had not been able to consider in greater detail the draft declaration on freedom of information and had contented itself with the adoption of procedural resolutions postponing consideration of the item until subsequent sessions.

37. With regard to the draft convention on freedom of information, the preamble and article 1 had been approved by the Committee at its fourteenth session and articles 2, 3 and 4 at its sixteenth session.

38. In that connexion, his delegation urged that the phrase "attacks on founders of religions", which appeared in article 2 of the draft convention and which reflected one of the recommendations made by Pakistan 15 years earlier with regard to the draft declaration, should also appear in article 5 of the draft declaration. The articles of the draft convention which remained to be discussed concerned the observance of high standards of professional conduct (article 5) and the right of a Contracting State to develop and protect national news enterprises, to prevent restrictive or monopolistic practices, and to control international broadcasting originating in its territory (article 7). The text

of the draft convention prepared by the special committee established by the General Assembly under the terms of its resolution 426 (V) had not yet been finalized. In pursuance of resolutions 1189 A (XII) and 1313 C (XIII), a number of Member States had made comments or proposals on specific articles. His delegation was particularly grateful that one of its suggestions had already been incorporated into the revised text of article 2. His delegation reiterated its suggestion that the words “and of the reasons therefor” should be deleted from article 11 (b), since that formula would limit the sovereign will of nations. It also supported the proposal made at the fourteenth session by the representatives of Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela² to insert a new article 6 in the draft convention.

39. His delegation regretted the fact that the Committee had not been able to spend more time on the question of freedom of information and hoped that progress would nevertheless be made in that area.

40. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia), referring to the beginning of consideration within the United Nations of the question of freedom of information, said that in the aftermath of the Second World War a number of Member States had felt that a convention on freedom of information was necessary in order to regulate information and prevent it from becoming an instrument of propaganda. The Second World War had supposedly been waged in the name of democracy against the forces of evil, fascism and nazism. Millions of persons had died for democracy. In that connexion, he wished to point out that at the time “democracy” had been the exclusive possession of the colonial Powers and there had never been any question of extending its benefits to the colonies even though they had fought at the former’s side. Even before the end of the war, the apostles of democracy had changed their tone: Churchill himself had said that he had not become Prime Minister to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. The forces of reaction had still been present at the signing of the Charter in San Francisco. After their victory, the Allies had divided into two blocs and the Soviet Union had become the bogey-man of the Western world. Information had been used to condition people’s minds, and free rein had been given to propaganda. Each camp had claimed to be in possession of the truth and had sung the praises of its own ideology, setting itself up as the champion of democracy. But was it really a question of democracy or rather of a perverted form of democracy? Small countries like Saudi Arabia had not wanted to be the victims of the great Powers or to be taken in by their propaganda. That was the *raison d’être* of the draft convention on freedom of information which had been submitted on the initiative of France and a number of Latin American countries.

41. Information could come in visual form (newspapers, silent films, pictures), auditory form (radio) or audio-visual

form (the cinema, television), and it was necessary to distinguish between information concerned with facts and information concerned with ideas. Unfortunately, the latter was by its very nature propagandistic since it involved opinion and indoctrination. In the case of such information, it was not easy to sort out the true from the false. Therefore, information concerned with ideas posed the greatest number of problems, since, although everyone had a right to his opinion, the free flow of information could become synonymous with indoctrination and serve to stir up nation against nation and even lead to war. Any mention of restrictions drew charges of tyranny. The United States continually affirmed that the free flow of information should be ensured, but it was above all necessary for information to be true and not in the service of narrow national interests.

42. He believed that freedom of information should not be synonymous with licence. There were quite plainly limits which should not be exceeded. In any case, it was inadmissible to pass off as art something whose only purpose was to arouse man’s basest instincts. The excesses which had been observed in recent years in the Western world—attacks on the founders of religions, the encouragement of pornography and promiscuity and the stirring up of violence—had demonstrated the need for some sort of regulation. Why should some people be forced in the name of freedom of information to accept things which offended their sensibilities or modesty?

43. He deplored the fact that for 22 years the Committee had constantly avoided consideration of the draft convention on freedom of information by assigning the wrong priority to it. It was time to take it up again in earnest. It had been suggested that the professional associations of journalists might establish an international code of ethics in order to determine what was harmful to public morality or might deceive or demoralize the world’s peoples. In that way the danger that Governments might intervene or impose their interpretations could be avoided. A number of professions had associations which exposed charlatans. Why could journalists not have such a body to protect them against correspondents who served as spies or *agents provocateurs*? Concurrently with consideration of the draft convention, of which four substantive articles had already been approved, it was necessary to strike a balance in each paragraph of the draft declaration and the Committee should give priority to that matter at its thirtieth session. It was not utopian to attempt to complete the preparation of both documents at the same time since the Committee had already followed such a procedure for the two International Covenants on Human Rights. He warned against the dangerous tendency to put off consideration of the draft convention each year, because the use of information for the purpose of influencing the mass mind could lead to new wars.

² A/C.3/L.843.