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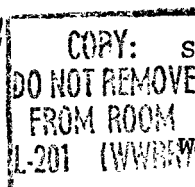
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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
38th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 20 November 1985
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 38th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KORHONEN (Finland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 76: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
(continued) (A/40/99, A/40/272; A/SPC/40/3)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (A/40/20 and Corr.1)
- (b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/40/621 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. CANALES MARQUEZ (Chile) considered that the central element of the law of outer space must be that outer space should be used for the benefit of all mankind. That principle must be applied in every field of space activity which could help the developing world to achieve decent living conditions. Space technology was accordingly faced by the challenge of developing new instruments which would contribute to sustained economic and social development. One such area concerned the remote sensing of the Earth by satellite, which involved such issues as non-discriminatory access to the data obtained and international responsibility for the abusive manipulation of such data. Those questions were inextricably linked to the issues of the permanent sovereignty of peoples over their natural resources and ultimately the legal equality of nations. If people did not have access to information regarding what belonged to them, they would hardly be in a position to insist on treatment on a basis of equality regarding its potential. Both in terms of logic and law, countries over whose territory data had been obtained should be entitled to set the price for it. A mechanism which would provide compensation in the event of the abusive use of such data should be established.

2. States had a positive legal duty to assist peoples in the exercise of their right to self-determination and a negative obligation to abstain from any action which would deprive them of that right. Any action designed to deprive peoples of such rights constituted intervention in terms of General Assembly resolutions 2136 (XX) and 2160 (XXI).

3. His delegation had therefore urged the adoption of an agreement on the issue as it was of crucial importance to the developing countries. Notwithstanding certain reservations, his delegation continued to believe that the document submitted by Austria at the previous session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) could be a suitable base on which a consensus could be developed.

4. Chile supported the Swedish proposal for a moratorium on the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. The alternative would be more specific legislation dealing with the issues of direct, indirect and delayed damage.

(Mr. Canales Marquez, Chile)

5. On the issue of the geostationary orbit, Chile believed that means must be found to eliminate the contradictions between the standards of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and article 11 of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. The matter was urgent in view of the interests and needs of the developing countries. There was also a need to establish a legal framework for the delimitation of outer space in order to eliminate the current confusion.
6. On a number of occasions, including during the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Chile had proposed the structuring of a world authority which would control products and services produced by the activity of States in and from outer space. Such an authority could ensure that the exploration of outer space was for exclusively peaceful purposes.
7. One of the greatest threats to the survival of mankind lay in the growing militarization of outer space. It was therefore imperative to have legal and political instruments for the prevention of devastating conflicts. A first step would be to authorize the Secretary-General to sound out Member States on the issue and on the modalities for making the universe an area of peace and co-operation. In that connection it would be useful to resuscitate a proposal which had been made in the past by France regarding the creation of an international satellite control agency.
8. In order to cope with the political, legal and scientific challenges posed by space technology, Chile believed that Latin America must act with unity and solidarity. The Latin American countries must therefore find the most effective means of achieving effective regional co-operation in the field of outer space. Means must be found to obtain jointly the maximum benefits of space technology for the economic and social development of the Latin-American peoples. In that connection, consideration might be given to the possibilities for mass literacy campaigns by satellite and the dissemination by satellite of technical information to rural and other areas.
9. Chile wished to reiterate its intention to arrive at agreements in the near future on remote sensing and in other areas of importance to developing countries.
10. Mr. MARIN BOSCH (Mexico) said that during the current year Mexico would complete the installation of its MORELOS satellite communications system thus meeting the needs of the Federal Microwave Network. The MORELOS I satellite was already in orbit and MORELOS II would follow in a few days' time; they would be in geostationary orbit 36,000 kilometres above the Earth's surface, and each satellite would have the capacity for 22 broadcast channels which would handle 32 television signals and 16,000 telephone conversations. Only one of the satellites would be used; the other would be for back-up purposes.
11. The efforts of the international community to ensure that activities in outer space would be for the benefit of the whole of mankind had been threatened by the interests of the space Powers which, seeking supremacy, were increasing their military activities in outer space.

(Mr. Marin Bosch, Mexico)

12. In that connection, it would be appropriate to compare what the General Assembly had requested in its resolution 39/96 with the contents of the report of COPUOS (A/40/20 and Corr.1). During the February session of the Legal and Technical Sub-Committee it had become clear that lack of funds would prevent the implementation of the activities recommended by UNISPACE 82; no agreement had been reached on the reconvening of the Working Group on the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space, nor had it been possible to achieve consensus for the approval of the three expert studies prepared pursuant to the recommendations of the second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82).

13. The Legal Sub-Committee had continued its examination of the legal implications of remote sensing of the Earth from space. The debate had centred on the sovereign rights of developing countries to access to the data obtained over their territories. In the view of his delegation, the text covering the principles which should govern remote sensing of the Earth from space required further consideration.

14. The results achieved by the Legal Sub-Committee on two other issues had been somewhat disparate. On the one hand, formulations had been worked out on the issue of notification prior to re-entry of a space object with nuclear power sources on board and on the theme of assistance to States. Those formulations could provide a basis for an agreement by consensus in the near future. On the other hand, no consideration had been given to the issue of the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit. Such disparity indicated clearly that, when the political will existed, significant progress could be achieved on certain issues.

15. The General Assembly had requested COPUOS to give high priority to the issue of ways and means for maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. Nevertheless, the ambiguity of paragraph 15 of resolution 39/96 had given rise to different interpretations on the approach to that question. Some delegations had pointed to the dangers inherent in the growing militarization of outer space while others had merely referred to advances in their Governments' own space programmes.

16. The proposal to revitalize COPUOS by examining its organization and methods of work and through the elimination of certain items from its competence in order to maximize its efficiency was cause for concern as it appeared to be designed to restrict the activities of COPUOS to the exchange of views on scientific and technological advances in order to avoid issues which were unwelcome to one country or another. His delegation was particularly concerned that such a manoeuvre would prevent COPUOS from giving further consideration to the major issue of the growing militarization of outer space. It would be impossible to promote international co-operation for the peaceful uses of outer space if the principal space Powers continued to intensify their military capability. In that connection, it had been argued that the only way to maintain the efficiency of COPUOS was to avoid its politicization. His delegation did not share that view; COPUOS was precisely the appropriate framework wherein States should examine the development of space activities and programmes for international co-operation. All issues of interest to the international community should therefore be discussed.

(Mr. Marin Bosch, Mexico)

17. In the meantime, the arms race in outer space had escalated. The "Star Wars" project had already involved investment in the United States of America in excess of \$2 billion. A vast network of vested interests had therefore already been created and a similar situation was undoubtedly developing in the Soviet Union. When the figures involved were compared with the scanty resources available for implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82, the degree of political will on the part of the principal space Powers to promote international co-operation for the peaceful uses of outer space became clear.

18. It was to be hoped that, at the conclusion of the summit meeting between the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union, a new impetus would be given to bilateral and multilateral negotiations on disarmament which would redound to the benefit of all mankind.

19. Mr. HOHENFELLNER (Austria) said that the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space had a record of positive achievements that few organs of the General Assembly could match. The international agreements which had been elaborated within the framework of COPUOS had had an essential impact on outer space developments.

20. In the view of his delegation, COPUOS should concentrate on setting the institutional framework for its work in 1986 and should then, in February 1986, start substantive work in the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee relating particularly to the discussion of concrete questions in the scientific, technical and legal fields.

21. COPUOS had not yet reached a breakthrough on many of the items on its agenda but had nevertheless made significant progress on some of them. Among the measures on which agreement had been reached by the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee had been a decision to continue consideration of the item relating to life sciences, including space medicine. The Sub-Committee had invited the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) and the International Astronautical Federation (IAF) to submit reports and to arrange a special presentation on progress in the geosphere-biosphere programme. It had also been agreed that the next session of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee would be focused on a specific theme and that COSPAR and IAF would arrange a symposium on that theme to complement the work done in the Sub-Committee itself. His delegation trusted that it would be possible for the interested group concerned to propose such a theme as soon as possible.

22. He expressed the appreciation of his delegation for the decision taken by COPUOS to grant permanent observer status to INTELSAT and INTERSPUTNIK.

23. The area in which most progress had been achieved during the past year had undoubtedly been the item on the legal implications of remote sensing of the Earth from space, with the aim of formulating draft principles. In that connection, his delegation had been able to submit a working document (A/AC.105/L.158), of which the Committee had taken note with appreciation. For lack of time, it had not been possible to take a decision on the draft principles but his delegation hoped that it would be possible to have the principles adopted by consensus in COPUOS and the General Assembly in 1986.

/...

(Mr. Hohenfellner, Austria)

24. Progress had also been made on the elaboration of draft principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. The Working Group on the item had been successful in working out formulations concerning "Notification prior to re-entry of a space object with nuclear power sources aboard" and "Assistance to States". In both cases, the report of the Legal Sub-Committee had noted that those formulations could provide a basis for agreement by consensus in the near future.

25. Fundamental differences of opinion continued to persist on the item concerning matters relating to the definition and delimitation of outer space and to the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit, including consideration of ways and means to ensure the rational and equitable use of the geostationary orbit without prejudice to the role of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

26. Austria viewed with concern the threat of an extension of the arms race into outer space. No more time must be lost to counter the trend to such a dangerous and wasteful dimension of the arms race. Austria therefore welcomed the decision of the two major space Powers to undertake negotiations on space weapons. It also hoped that the summit meeting currently under way in Geneva would provide a new impetus to those negotiations.

27. On the multilateral plane, his delegation had noted with satisfaction the agreement reached in the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of an ad hoc working group on the prevention of an arms race in outer space. All delegations had the right to express their views on the issue of the arms race in outer space in COPUOS, which, however, had been set up to promote the peaceful uses of outer space. It was by focusing on the possibilities for co-operation and for sharing the benefits of space technology that COPUOS could make its best contribution.

28. Mr. WANG Houli (China) said that the United Nations had played a positive, useful and fruitful role in ensuring the peaceful use of outer space and in assisting developing countries to utilize outer space technologies. The treaties and principles formulated and adopted under the auspices of the United Nations to govern the exploration and use of outer space by States had become an important component of contemporary international law. The great advances made in space science and technology had accelerated development in States, but such progress had not been without problems. The danger of the militarization of outer space had been increased by the escalation of the nuclear arms race. The United Nations and COPUOS should strive actively to reverse such negative trends. China, for its part, was opposed to military activities of any kind in outer space and hoped that the super-Powers would engage in serious negotiations to end the arms race in that area.

29. His delegation was generally satisfied with the work accomplished this year by the Committee and its two Sub-Committees. Progress had been made in the discussion of several items, despite great divergences concerning some of the items on the agenda. The Working Group on Remote Sensing of the Legal Sub-Committee had produced a well-balanced set of draft articles, which took into account both recent

(Mr. Wang Houli, China)

developments in remote sensing technologies and the interests of developing countries. Although the document had not been adopted at the twenty-eighth session of the Committee, the spirit of co-operation by all parties made it likely that the draft principles would eventually be adopted. His delegation was also pleased to note that the title "Use of nuclear power sources in outer space" had been modified in an objective way. The proposal by certain delegations that some new items should be added to the agenda of the Committee was constructive, since many new issues had emerged with the rapid development of space science and technology. The Committee must also complete its business expeditiously, in order to keep abreast with new developments.

30. The exploration and use of outer space had produced useful results over the past year, although certain unhealthy developments also caused concern. There was an urgent need to prevent extension of the arms race into outer space, and China would continue to join in the common endeavour to promote the use of outer space in the true interests of mankind.

31. Mr. FARTAS (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his country had followed with interest the activities of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and appreciated its efforts to channel the benefits of space exploration towards all States, including the developing countries. It had submitted a request for membership of that Committee to the President of the General Assembly and had established its own national committee for the peaceful uses of outer space.

32. Despite the difficulties faced by COPUOS and its lack of progress on certain items, it had achieved positive results by establishing certain important principles in the form of declarations and treaties which embodied international consensus and reflected the collective wishes of Member States. The efforts of the Committee were complementary to those of the Committee on Disarmament, and both Committees should co-ordinate their efforts in the service of common objectives. COPUOS should be permitted to express its views on all matters relating to outer space, particularly those affecting international peace and security, without affecting in any way the authority of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, to which it might provide significant support. There was no reason to restrict its mandate or to reduce its role, and Member States should instead be encouraged to provide the necessary support to enable it to discharge its functions.

33. His delegation welcomed all initiatives aimed at preventing an extension of the arms race to outer space.

34. It was clear that the Committee could not rapidly achieve its objectives without the required international consensus, including agreement on a specific definition of outer space and the various activities connected with it.

35. His delegation understood the fears of developing countries with respect to saturation of the geostationary orbit and felt that a definition should be laid down for that orbit. The two opposing views that the orbit constituted or did not constitute a part of outer space both had their virtues, but discussion of various

(Mr. Fartas, Libyan Arab
Jamahiriya)

opinions should produce a definition acceptable to all. With regard to remote sensing of the Earth by satellites, his delegation felt that such activity should be devoted to economic and social development in all countries, particularly the developing countries, with due regard for the sovereignty of the country whose territory was sensed. Information obtained by remote sensing should be provided to that country and not leaked without permission to any other State. His delegation hoped that the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee would make progress in its efforts to overcome differences of opinion with respect to remote sensing of the Earth by satellites and that principles would be formulated to govern such activities.

36. His delegation believed that direct television broadcasting by satellites should be used to develop international co-operation in the various fields of information and culture. No broadcasts should be made without the permission of the receiving State, despite the principle of the free flow of information, since the use of satellites by technologically advanced States might permit the broadcasting of programmes which affected the national character of the receiving States. Such practices undoubtedly constituted a violation of the sovereignty of those States and an interference in their internal affairs. He hoped that the Legal Sub-Committee would formulate appropriate principles to govern direct television broadcasting by satellites.

37. His delegation expressed its overriding concern for the peaceful use of outer space and the prevention of an extension of the arms race thereto. It also supported the declaration issued by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the non-aligned countries, which called for urgent measures to prevent the militarization of outer space and agreed with those who hoped that the current bilateral talks in Geneva would help to prevent an extension of the arms race to outer space.

38. Mr. KAKOLECKI (Poland) said that the non-militarization of outer space was the most important prerequisite for peaceful co-operation in outer space. A number of international treaties and other legal documents constituted the legal basis for peaceful co-operation in outer space. The Soviet Union had put forward numerous initiatives in that regard, which had already gained widespread international support. The non-militarization of outer space would protect mankind against the lethal effects of the arms race in outer space and lead to great progress in the development of science and technology for the benefit of all nations. As the Prime Minister of Poland had proposed, it would be desirable for a study to be prepared by eminent experts of different nationalities, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, on the diverse consequences of the militarization of outer space.

39. His delegation attached great importance to the work of COPUOS on the ways and means for maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. The Committee and its two Sub-Committees were appropriate bodies to discuss those matters, which were

(Mr. Kakolecki, Poland)

absolutely vital for their further activities. He commended the work of the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee in carrying out the recommendations of UNISPACE 82. Poland, within its limited resources, contributed to scientific progress in the exploration of outer space through its national programmes and in the framework of the INTERCOSMOS programme. His country's experience in the practical applications of remote sensing had increased significantly. Furthermore, the proposed establishment in Poland of an international remote-sensing centre for the developing countries would be a useful contribution to the practical implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82.

40. The work of the Legal Sub-Committee contributed to the progressive development of international space law. The working document on the draft principles relating to the legal implications of remote sensing of the Earth from space could provide a basis for agreement by consensus in the near future. His delegation supported, in particular, the provisions referring to the safeguarding of the legitimate rights and interests of the sensed State, the protection of the Earth's natural environment and the protection of mankind from natural disasters. In general, the working document should be considered a compromise solution which might be the only basis for the final text.

41. He stressed that the launching of space objects equipped with nuclear power sources should be carried out on the basis of clear, internationally accepted rules. His delegation noted with satisfaction the draft formulations put forward by the Working Group considering the theme notification prior to re-entry of a space object with nuclear power sources on board and the theme assistance to States. It was hoped that the Legal Sub-Committee would elaborate draft principles on that subject in the near future.

42. Unfortunately, there had been no progress in reaching agreement on the delimitation of outer space and the use of the geostationary orbit. The definition and delimitation of outer space was of paramount importance for future co-operation in outer space. In that connection, he stressed the urgent need to establish a boundary between air space and outer space at an appropriate altitude above sea-level in order to guarantee observance of the principle of freedom of outer space and safeguard the sovereignty of States over their airspace in accordance with the relevant international agreements.

43. The legal regulation of the geostationary orbit was essential in order to protect the interests of States. He reiterated his Government's position that the geostationary orbit was inseparable from outer space as a whole and was governed by the relevant provisions of the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. The use of the geostationary orbit should ensure equitable access by all States, depending on their needs and technical capabilities. ITU should continue to play an important role, within its competence, in ensuring the proper use of the geostationary orbit.

44. COPUOS and its Legal Sub-Committee were the most appropriate bodies to fill in existing gaps in international space law. The Legal Sub-Committee could elaborate

(Mr. Kakolecki, Poland)

a draft convention on direct broadcasting by satellite on the basis of the relevant principles put forward by the General Assembly. Those principles should be codified in a legally binding international document in order to prevent misuse of direct broadcasting by satellite.

45. Mr. SZELEI (Hungary) said that there was a clearly growing need for international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space, and that the work of COPUOS was of increasing value. His delegation believed firmly that it was urgently necessary to prevent the militarization of outer space. Such militarization would not only absorb enormous material and intellectual resources, but would also lead to a dangerous increase in international tension. His delegation welcomed all endeavours to preserve outer space for peaceful purposes, and lent its full support to the major new initiative of the Soviet Union in that connection. His country had also supported the call contained in General Assembly resolution 39/96, which requested the Committee to consider ways and means for maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes. It further supported the call in the report of the Committee for strict observance of existing agreements and emphasized the importance of a positive outcome of bilateral negotiations between the Soviet Union and the United States on nuclear and space armaments, as well as of multilateral negotiations on the prevention of the arms race in space.

46. His delegation generally endorsed the contents of the report of the Committee. It welcomed the discussion on remote sensing and the efforts by delegations to reach agreement on that issue. It was regrettable that agreement had not been reached, and his delegation felt that the time had come to examine carefully the legal implications of remote sensing of the Earth by satellites, with the aim of formulating appropriate draft principles, to be finalized by the Legal Sub-Committee. His delegation hoped for a successful outcome of the work of the Legal Sub-Committee on the definition and delimitation of outer space. It also expressed its appreciation of the work accomplished by the Scientific and Technical Sub-Committee, and followed with great interest the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82. On the question of the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, it concurred with the view contained in the report of the Committee.

47. His delegation had long felt that COPUOS should devote more attention to the codification of laws governing the peaceful uses of outer space. The Committee should be entrusted with the task of elaborating a draft instrument additional to the 1967 Outer Space Treaty, which should contain the general principles of the prohibition of use of force in outer space. Binding rules of law might also be established to govern direct television broadcasting by satellites.

48. His delegation expressed its full confidence in COPUOS, and was ready to join others in helping that Committee to promote the peaceful exploration and use of outer space for the benefit of all mankind.

49. Mr. DVORNY (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that at the current time more than 100 States were participating in national and international space programmes. In the past year in the Ukrainian SSR research programmes had been

(Mr. Dvorny, Ukrainian SSR)

carried out in such fields as space physics and astronomy, space astronomy and navigation, space biology and the study of the Earth and the Earth's oceans from outer space. Great attention had been given to research conducted under a number of international programmes. The "Venus-Halley's Comet" programme was a further demonstration of the readiness of the socialist countries to undertake multilateral co-operation in the exploration of outer space. The scientific institutions of the Ukrainian SSR actively participated in carrying out that project with Soviet scientists and with specialists from a large number of countries. Furthermore, in its less than three years of existence, the international COSPAS-SARSAT satellite system for locating ships and aircraft in distress had rescued more than 500 persons.

50. Those examples demonstrated what could be achieved through international co-operation in the peaceful uses of outer space. Such co-operation, rather than the development of the sinister "Star Wars" programme, would contribute to the normalization of the international situation in general. There was no doubt that the Strategic Defense Initiative would introduce new, extremely dangerous weapons into outer space. The recently established United States joint armed forces outer space command and the outer space centre designed to direct military activities in space would not be used solely for research purposes. It was obvious that the Strategic Defense Initiative aimed at the militarization of outer space was an attempt to obtain a nuclear first-strike capability from outer space. That programme significantly increased the danger of the outbreak of nuclear war.

51. The Soviet Union had not only called for urgent measures to prevent the militarization of outer space but had also put forward concrete proposals to bring about a radical solution to that problem. At the current session of the General Assembly, the Soviet Union had put forward a new initiative concerning international co-operation in the peaceful exploration of outer space under conditions of its non-militarization. The joint efforts of States in carrying out peaceful space activities would promote mutual understanding and international co-operation and open up unlimited perspectives in the use of space technology for the economic and social progress of peoples.

52. The last session of COPUOS showed that the main obstacle to the development of international co-operation in that field was the threat of the militarization of outer space. His delegation favoured the adoption of the report of COPUOS and felt that it was necessary to give its activities further impetus. COPUOS should consider the question of the role of private capital in the various spheres of activity in the exploration and use of outer space. All activities in outer space carried out on the basis of private capital should be permitted only within the framework of the participation of States parties to treaties concerning the use of outer space.

53. In the coming year, COPUOS could make significant progress toward solving such important legal problems as establishing the boundary between air space and outer space and regulating the use of the geostationary orbit. Lastly, he stressed that outer space must be used in the service of peace and for the good of all mankind.

AGENDA ITEM 78: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued) (A/40/21)
- (b) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/40/617 and 841)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued) (A/40/667)

54. Mr BORIO (Brazil) said that his delegation could not agree with the view that the role of the Committee on Information should be limited to one of supervising the work of the Department of Public Information (DPI). It was necessary to decide whether the real, substantive problems which divided the members of that Committee could be solved. If a minimum compromise could not be achieved, serious consideration should be given to the possibility of recommending significant and, possibly, radical changes. His delegation, however, was confident that there was room for negotiation on the substantive questions relating to information.

55. The chances of reaching agreement would be increased by carrying out a serious review of the divisive issues in order to identify possible areas for compromise. A thorough examination of such questions as the establishment of a new world information and communication order might demonstrate the possibility of reaching agreement in certain areas. A reasonable degree of flexibility on the part of all delegations might then lead to considerable progress with regard to problems such as access to information, the relationship between information, communication and economic and social development; the free flow of information; media and propaganda; disarmament; the struggle against apartheid; and public information activities in specific priority areas such as Namibia and the Middle East. It was regrettable that the Committee on Information had been unable to adopt its recommendations on the basis of consensus. Nevertheless, consensus, although highly desirable, could not be the sole modality.

56. His delegation noted with satisfaction the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/40/667). In spite of the difficulties facing it, UNESCO had successfully carried out activities in the field of information, particularly under the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and with regard to the establishment of a new world information and communication order. It was gratifying to note the work carried out by DPI. The report of the Secretary-General on the restructuring of the Radio and Visual Services Division of DPI (A/40/841) provided valuable information in response to the concerns of many delegations, including his own. Nevertheless, some questions remained unanswered, particularly those relating to the financial implications of the proposal and the problems involved in its implementation in the middle of a budgetary biennium. It was hoped that that question would be considered further at the next regular session of the Committee on Information. Lastly, he expressed satisfaction at the assistance provided by the United Nations Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro to his Government in carrying out a number of activities in connection with the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations.

57. Mr. LASARTE (Uruguay) said that freedom of individual expression was the corner-stone of all other freedoms. With its return to democracy, Uruguay fully supported the role of the press against abuses of power and was opposed to Government control of the information media. His delegation stressed the total validity of article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which laid down the right to freedom of opinion and expression, including freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

58. The recognition of that basic human right should be given careful consideration in the discussions on the establishment of a new world information and communication order. The right to inform and to be informed was the best guarantee against the centralized control of the information media and the manipulation of public opinion. The debate on the establishment of such an order should also focus on the right of nations to communicate through various information media, regardless of their ideological and social differences. It was also necessary to take into consideration the technological advances which had resulted in a situation where 75 per cent of the world's population was dependent on outside sources of information because they possessed only 10 per cent of the overall information resources. It was obvious that most countries were unable by themselves to overcome the limitations preventing them from establishing or improving national information infrastructures.

59. The multilateral information strategy should focus not on restricting the activities of the information media, but rather on diversifying the sources of information and strengthening the national infrastructures of developing countries. IPDC aimed at achieving those goals. It was therefore a question of equal participation by all States in the international flow of information on the basis of mutual respect for cultural identity.

60. His delegation supported the work of the Committee on Information, particularly on its task of evaluating the activities of DPI and improving the national and regional communication systems of developing countries. Uruguay also reaffirmed its support for the efforts of DPI to disseminate information in an objective manner on the achievements of the Organization.

61. Mr. SIMENI (Nigeria) suggested that the highly enlightened statements made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information should be circulated among delegations.

62. Information played an extremely important role in promoting or preventing peace and stability on earth, and his delegation therefore took a keen interest in questions relating thereto. Blocked channels of communication could lead to hostility, while effective communication channels could defuse potentially explosive situations. Both the achievements and the failures of the United Nations could be attributed to the existence of a lack of collective will on the part of Member States to correct injustices in the international community. One such injustice, the imbalance in the flow of information, resulted from the non-objective coverage by developed countries of issues and events in the developing world.

(Mr. Simeni, Nigeria)

63. His delegation believed that the problem lay in the unwillingness of technologically advanced countries to address the substantive issue of imbalance in the flow of information and their lack of honest commitment to the principle of the new world information and communication order. His delegation emphasized the urgent need to change the dependent status of the developing countries in the field of information and communication. The principle of sovereign equality among nations could, if properly respected, strengthen peace and international understanding. The freedom to circulate information did not necessarily entail attempts by one country to destabilize another.

64. His delegation expressed its support for the work of UNESCO in the area of information and communication and commended its efforts to achieve effective management of its resources. DPI had also done useful work in covering the crisis in Africa. The United Nations should disseminate more information on other issues of major international concern and should, in particular, focus attention on areas where natural disasters had taken place, in order to attract assistance from the international community. His delegation hoped that the Department would benefit from increased financial allocations, in view of its increased responsibilities.

65. His delegation was pleased to note the opening of further information centres by DPI and expressed the hope that outdated equipment in existing centres might be replaced. It also hoped that full-time directors would be appointed to the United Nations Information Centres in Yaoundé and Bujumbura, as suggested in document A/40/617.

66. His delegation regretted that the Committee had not adopted its report by consensus at its substantive session. However, disagreements were always likely to occur in human organizations and were not of a permanent nature. Consensus was certain to be restored, provided that the collective will to continue efforts remained. An opportunity would be provided for peace if the new world information and communication order were to be allowed to come into being.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.