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QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/164 B of 16 December 1985.

* A/41/150.

ANNEX

Report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization on the application of the
International Programme for the Development of Communication,
the activities relating to the establishment of a new world
information and communication order and on the social, economic
and cultural effects of the accelerated development of
communication technologies

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Pursuant to resolution 40/164 B of 16 December 1985, the Director-General of UNESCO presented to the one hundred and twenty-fourth session of the Executive Board, held in Paris in May 1986, under item 6.1 of the Board's agenda ("Recent decisions and activities of the organizations of the United Nations system of relevance to the work of UNESCO") a report on questions relating to information. In accordance with decision 6.1.2 of the Executive Board (124 EX/28 and 124 EX/51), inviting the Director-General to submit to the General Assembly, at its forty-first session, a report on the application of the International Programme for the Development of Communication of UNESCO, and the activities relating to the establishment of a new world information and communication order seen as an evolving and continuous process, as well as on the social, economic and cultural effects of the accelerated development of communication technologies, the Director-General of UNESCO has the honour to submit the present report to the General Assembly.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION AND OTHER ACTIVITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION

A. Activities of the International Programme for the Development of Communication

2. Since submitting the report to the General Assembly at its fortieth session (A/40/667), the Intergovernmental Council of IPDC held its seventh ordinary session in Paris in January 1986.

3. This session approved contributions from the IPDC Special Account to 61 projects. Five of these projects are interregional, 19 regional and 37 national.

4. Among the projects approved are 13 interregional and regional projects already being implemented, but which required additional financing. These are: (a) Training of electronic news-gathering teams for the Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa (URTNA); (b) Institute for Communication Research of the African Council of Communication Education; (c) Development of broadcasting in Africa (ITU); (d) Communication training and career development of women in Africa; (e) Arab Project for Communication Planning and Exchange; (f) Arab States Broadcasting Union Training Centre, Damascus; (g) Asia-Pacific co-operation for film and video exchange; (h) Promoting media involvement in public health in the Pacific (Asian Mass Communication Research Information Centre (AMIC)/World Health Organization (WHO)); (i) Pacific Broadcasting Training; (j) Assistance to the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development; (k) Development of a computerized network for the Latin American Special Information Services Agency (ALASEI); (l) Caribbean broadcasting training; (m) Training centre of graphic design for multi-media in Brazil.

5. Six ongoing national projects were also provided with additional financing. These projects are in Angola, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Jamaica and Panama.

6. The new interregional and regional projects approved and financed by the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Council of IPDC include: Ibero-American information service on translation; Subtitling of film and television programmes from developing countries; Creation of an interregional network of women journalists (Inter-Press Service); Periodic report on the state of communication in the world; Promotion of textbooks for training of journalists in Africa; Co-production of reading materials in Hausa and Fulfulde; Promoting public health and nutrition in the French-speaking countries of West and Central Africa, with the need to involve the mass media; Editorial and management training in Asia (Press Foundation of Asia); Latin American and Caribbean Broadcasting Union (ULCRA); Radio and television policies in Andean countries.

7. The new national projects approved during the session are in Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brazil, Cape Verde, Colombia, the Comoros, Democratic Yemen, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guyana, Jordan, Kenya, The Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, the Seychelles, Thailand, Tonga and Zimbabwe.

8. The Intergovernmental Council recommended 25 other projects for which no funds were available from the Special Account, and requested the secretariat to seek other sources for financing these projects. Twelve projects were returned to the institutions or Governments concerned, with a request that a more detailed study be made before re-submission to IPDC, and four projects were rejected.

9. During the seventh session, the Intergovernmental Council elected the Bureau for 1986-1987, following the renewal of the mandate of half the members during the twenty-third session of the General Conference of UNESCO. Mr. Gunnar Garbo (Norway) was re-elected President of the Council, and the representatives of Ecuador, India and Yemen were elected Vice-Presidents. The other members of the Bureau are Nigeria (Rapporteur), Benin, France and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Members of the Council newly elected, or re-elected, at the twenty-third session of the General Conference are the following: China, Ecuador, Ghana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Morocco, Nepal, Oman, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Venezuela.

10. During the seventh session, the Council decided to support the publication of a periodic report on the state of communication in the world, which would be essentially a factual document, bringing together statistical data, reference materials and analyses of current trends in the communication and information field, to provide a source of reference for planners and decision-makers. A vote was taken in favour of allocating resources to its preparation. A pilot version, prepared by the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau and the Council of IPDC, will be ready at the end of 1987, and publication is foreseen, subject to the approval of the twenty-fourth session of the General Conference of UNESCO, in 1988.

B. Resources of the Programme

11. As mentioned in the report to the fortieth session of the General Assembly (A/40/667), the most crucial problem facing IPDC is the fact that the number of projects submitted for financing is increasing rapidly, whereas the contributions to the Special Account are at a standstill. During 1986, the President of the IPDC Council has drawn the attention of many international gatherings to this situation, which gives cause for alarm. The Director-General of UNESCO has also drawn the attention of member States to this problem, which may seriously hinder new programme activities.

12. Voluntary contributions pledged to the Special Account amount at present to \$10,435,000. Five countries continue to pay regular contributions into the Special Account, which allows IPDC to plan its activities realistically. At present, the following countries have made contributions to the Special Account: Algeria, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Canada, China, Cyprus, Egypt, Finland, France, Gabon, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, San Marino, Tunisia, Turkey, Trinidad and Tobago, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Venezuela, Yugoslavia and Zambia.

13. The upward trend of the past years for Governments and foundations to agree to funds-in-trust arrangements for projects approved by IPDC continues. Eight countries are financing such projects: Canada, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Sweden, Switzerland and United States of America. The following countries have offered to provide experts or study grants to the Programme: Algeria, Argentina, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, India, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Poland, Sweden, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Yugoslavia. The International Organization of Journalists should also be mentioned in this context.

C. General observations

14. Since its foundation, out of a total of 370 projects submitted to it, IPDC has contributed to 205 projects out of the Special Account. Of these, 109 were national projects and 100 were regional or interregional. The percentage figure is 56 per cent of the projects submitted (68 per cent of the regional projects and 50 per cent of the national projects). Out of a total of \$61,326,500 requested for the financing of projects, IPDC has been able to allocate \$12,641,000 (4.85 per cent of total requests), of which 22 per cent was for training, 21 per cent for the development of research and training centres (a total of 43 per cent for training activities), 20 per cent for the creation or development of press agencies, 15 per cent for radio and television, 9 per cent for planning activities, 4 per cent for audio-visual projects, 4 per cent for the development of books and reading, 3 per cent for telecommunication projects and 3 per cent for the development of the written press. In view of the work accomplished by UNESCO through IPDC during the Programme's five years of existence, it is expected that the international community will answer the repeated appeals made and provide greater support and increased financing in order to enable this Programme to respond more and more positively to the requests it receives.

D. Other activities for the development of communication

15. Operational activities continue to play a major role in UNESCO's communication programme. While both Regular Programme and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resources have declined in the period under review, extrabudgetary projects continued at the 1985 level and, for the development of news agencies in particular, 1986 showed a slight increase. Including those financed by the IPDC Special Account, the number of communication projects under execution during the year totalled more than 140.

16. The Federal Republic of Germany again led the contribution to funds-in-trust, while Denmark, France, Norway and Switzerland either increased or maintained their previous level of participation in this form of project financing. Canada also joined the ranks of funds-in-trust sponsors.

17. More than half of the projects and resources for communication development were directed towards Africa, while new projects were also launched in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Asia and the Pacific, and in the Arab States. Major projects were begun to assist the development of national news agencies in East and southern Africa; for the development of rural radio and journalism training in Nepal; and, in co-operation with the Fredrik-Ebert Foundation, for the development of radio broadcasting in the Pacific.

18. Emphasis throughout these projects has been on training, mostly through national and subregional courses conducted by institutions and specialists of the region concerned. With problems of foreign exchange placing an increasing constraint on the maintenance and expansion of communication infrastructures, however, developing countries have turned to UNESCO more and more for new or replacement equipment without which the best-trained journalists, producers and technicians cannot work.

19. Major communication projects under execution during 1986, with their sources of financing, include the following:

(a) Africa

- West and Central Africa news agency development (Federal Republic of Germany)
- East and southern Africa news agency development (Federal Republic of Germany)
- Communication for the Economic Community of the Great Lakes (France)
- Development of the rural press in the United Republic of Tanzania (Norway)
- Development of the rural press in West Africa (Switzerland)
- Development of the rural press in Kenya (Federal Republic of Germany)
- Development of broadcasting training in Zimbabwe (Netherlands)

(b) Asia and the Pacific

Rural radio development in Sri Lanka (Denmark)

Development of radio in the Pacific (IPDC and the Fredrik-Ebert Foundation)

Community radio development in Nepal (Federal Republic of Germany)

Journalism training in Nepal (Denmark)

(c) Latin America and the Caribbean

Modernization of the Caribbean News Agency (Federal Republic of Germany)

Development of the Latin American Special Information Services Agency (ALASEI)
(News Agency) (Federal Republic of Germany)

III. ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW
WORLD INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ORDER

A. Concepts relating to a new world information and communication
order seen as an evolving and continuous process

20. Following the decision adopted by the Executive Board of UNESCO at its one hundred and twentieth session (120 EX/Decision 4.1, para. 25), which was subsequently confirmed by a decision of its one hundred and twenty-first session (121 EX/Decision 4.1, paras. 53 and 57), resolution 3.1 (item 5 (a)) of the twenty-third session of the General Conference (October–November 1985) invited the Director-General to undertake, within Programme III.1. (Studies on Communication) "overall analyses of work already carried out or currently in progress on the concepts of a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, the right to communicate, pluralism, and access to and participation in the field of communication, taking steps where necessary to broaden the study base and maintaining links of close co-operation with the competent professional organizations and non-governmental organizations". Thus, the organization's programme continues to consolidate existing knowledge regarding a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, taking into account the views and experiences of professional, research and non-governmental organizations active in the communication field.

21. As authorized by the one hundred and nineteenth session of the Executive Board (119 EX/Decision 5.2.6, para. 10) UNESCO and the United Nations Department of Public Information jointly convened the second round table on a new world information and communication order. At the invitation of the Government of Denmark and with the co-operation of the Danish National Commission for UNESCO, the round table was held at Copenhagen from 2 to 7 April 1986. The Director-General reported orally on its results to the Executive Board of UNESCO at its one hundred and twenty-fourth session, while a written report was submitted to the Committee on Information at its June session (A/AC.198/97).

22. The round table was characterized by a remarkable spirit of respect for mutual differences, and a shared belief that the improvements embodied in the idea of a new world information and communication order can become a reality only through further intellectual and practical co-operation among all concerned. There was almost unanimous agreement on a number of suggestions dealing with the practical aspects of a new world information and communication order, such as international co-operation in training and further training of communication professionals in the developing countries; encouragement of these countries' endogenous communication development, particularly the production of software; further sensitization of media professionals and the general public to communication needs and possibilities through research, discussions and such publications as the UNESCO/IPDC World Communication Report, which is now in preparation. The round table simply confirmed that the qualification of a new world information and communication order as an evolving and continuous process corresponds to the realities of a heterogeneous, pluralistic world in which all voices have the right to be heard.

23. Other work on this theme initiated by the organization in the past year focuses primarily on the preparation of a comprehensive historical survey of documents dealing with a new world information and communication order since the idea originated at the beginning of the 1970s. This publication will include documents adopted by international professional and non-governmental organizations as well as by intergovernmental bodies, and it should prove to be a valuable reference tool.

24. As part of the organization's efforts to improve existing communication structures and to redress current information and communication imbalances both world-wide and within particular regions and nations, attention continues to be given to such key concepts as plurality of information, promotion of access to and participation in communication both in the public and private sectors, and the "right to communicate". These are being examined mostly through national case-studies undertaken in various regions and different socio-cultural settings, but sharing, as far as possible, a commonly defined methodology to assure comparability. Particular emphasis is being placed on encouraging greater access and participation by women and young people, notably through the development of media education.

25. Studies on the contribution of the media to mutual respect, international understanding, respect of human rights and peace, and to the elucidation of major world problems have concentrated mainly on the role played by the media in informing and sensitizing the public to questions of disarmament and peace, and to other major world problems such as famine, sickness, poverty and ecological hazards. In this context, a comprehensive study on the media's contribution to world-wide security and peace, carried out by the International Social Sciences Council (ISSC), is being published by the University for Peace as a joint UNESCO/ISSC/University for Peace contribution to the International Year of Peace. Work in this area also includes a study of the treatment of apartheid on television in Africa, which is being prepared in co-operation with professional institutions and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

26. An international project on the information situation of migrant workers, comprising 25 sub-studies in 15 countries, has received continuing support and is expected to be concluded in 1988. Regional studies of ways in which the media can accommodate the information needs of refugees have also begun after consultations with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

27. UNESCO's recent efforts to promote the Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War (adopted in 1978 by the General Conference of UNESCO) have concentrated on the preparation of a brochure for French-speaking schoolchildren to acquaint them with the substance and purpose of the Declaration. The prototype was tested in 1985 on a sample of 1,500 schoolchildren and has aroused great interest among adults and children. It is now being produced in English and Spanish, and will be disseminated in co-operation with the World Federation of UNESCO Clubs and other interested non-governmental organizations. In addition, an international symposium to consider the effects of the Declaration will be organized in the course of the biennium 1986-1987 for organizations and persons professionally involved in communication.

B. Free flow and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information; increased exchange of news and programmes

28. Studies on international information flow and the identification of major obstacles to the free flow of information have continued to form an important part of UNESCO's programme on communication. They are considered to be central to a concept of a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, and contribute to widening and balancing the flow of information. The aim is to develop practical mechanisms for news and programme exchange, and the encouragement of inter-professional co-operation.

29. Among the recently published studies are the "International Flow of Television Programmes" and a detailed analysis, "Foreign News in the Media: International Reporting in 29 Countries". The effect of video on information flow has been analysed in a world-wide comparative study that will be published in 1987, and a survey of services offered by communication satellites has been completed. The new and more complex patterns of flow created by the new communication technologies calls for a revision of the data collection methods applied in earlier studies, and UNESCO is at present exploring the conditions under which a regular monitoring system might be established (possibly in association with the UNESCO/IPDC World Communication Report).

30. A survey of the international flow of television fiction is now under way, in preparation for a consultation of experts proposed for 1987. A preliminary inquiry into the national and international legal aspects of information flow is nearing completion and its findings will be published in 1987.

31. Several-case-studies on censorship and on the contribution of the media towards preventing abuses of power have been completed and further studies have been initiated to ensure a representative analysis of different economic and social systems. Publication of the collective case-studies is envisaged for 1987.

32. Special assistance has been given to the Pan African News Agency (PANA) and an agreement establishing effective working relations has been concluded with the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool, in order to improve the collection and dissemination of news at regional level.

33. UNESCO is also developing a software programme called OSCAR (Open System for Communication, Administration and Retrieval) for the automatization by computers at the headquarters of PANA. OSCAR comprises a message-switching system, word processing and data base and management designed for the future requirements of this regional news agency. The computerization is based upon the widespread development of microcomputers, and uses universally available operating systems (MS-DOS and UNIX). The software will eventually be available to other news agencies in developing countries. Concurrently, UNESCO will collaborate with PANA on an experimental project under INTELSAT's project "Share", where low-cost technology developed by UNESCO consultants and portable ground stations developed by an associated communication agency will be tested.

34. In the field of computer animation, in a joint venture of electronics and informatics and a spin-off of simulation technique development, UNESCO has provided media personnel (especially those in television from the developing world) with the possibility of learning these new techniques in picture production, which are changing the production field tremendously.

35. Possible means of improving dissemination in the industrialized countries of television programmes emanating from developing countries have been analysed, and a meeting to discuss future initiatives in this area will be held in Europe in late 1986.

36. Finally, an evaluation of recently established regional mechanisms for exchange and collaboration has been initiated in the Latin American region, and expansion of this project to Asia and the Pacific and Africa is expected.

IV. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL EFFECTS OF THE ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

37. In resolution 40/164 B, the General Assembly "encourages the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to continue and intensify its studies, programmes and activities with a view to identifying new technological trends in information, communication, telematics and informatics and assess their socio-economic and cultural impact on the development of peoples, and in this context requests it to provide, whenever necessary, periodic studies relevant to these topics".

38. During the past year, UNESCO's ongoing programme of collaborative research into the impact of the new communication technologies has entered its second phase. The project originated in the Symposium on the Cultural, Social and Economic Impact of the New Communication Technologies, held at Rome in December 1983, in the course of which plans were made and a research agenda prepared for a series of studies to be conducted in different world regions over the period of UNESCO's second medium-term plan (1984-1989).

39. Detailed planning was entrusted to a series of geographically based consultations, the first of which (covering Latin America, the Caribbean and North America) took place in Florida, United States of America, in December 1984. A second consultation was held in December 1985, at Ahmedabad, India, bringing together researchers and institutions from Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Arab States. The series closed with a consultation for the Europe region, which was held at Gothenburg, Sweden, in January 1986.

40. The purpose of the programme, as elaborated by these three consultations, is twofold: firstly, to promote a series of collaborative research studies, initially at the regional level, and, secondly, to prepare and distribute periodic digests and inventories of research in progress throughout the world. The approved programme and budget of UNESCO for 1986-1987 (23 C/5 Approved) authorized an "intellectual and financial contribution to carrying out 30 comparative studies on the socio-cultural impact of new communication technologies" and the "collection, collation and half-yearly distribution of basic documentation and also of the conclusions of the research carried out in all regions of the world".

41. Both of these initiatives are now well under way: their precise orientation set by the recommendations and networks established during the regional consultations. As a follow-up to the Florida consultation, two editions of a research newsletter, covering both Latin America and the Caribbean and North America, have been prepared, co-ordinated by the Instituto para América Latina, Peru, and a South-North network of researchers and research institutions is being formed, stemming from a planning meeting held at Caracas in April 1986. Collaborative projects are also being planned, the first linking Canada and Mexico, the second, various countries of the Caribbean. They will be concerned with the cultural dimension and spill-over effects of the new communication technologies.

42. Thirty-eight scholars from 16 countries in Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Arab States accompanied for the consultation at Ahmedabad, India, in December 1985. Their composition reflected a deliberate mix of interests, including researchers, media professionals, engineers, scientists, policy-makers and creative workers.

43. The parallel consultation for Europe, which was held one month later, at Gothenburg, Sweden, was also broadly representative; it was attended by 77 participants from 19 countries, made up primarily of communication researchers. They too came from a wide variety of disciplines, the majority being already engaged in research into the new communication technology field.

44. In each meeting the emphasis was less upon formal papers than on discussion within specialized working groups. These reflected three main perspectives: technology policy and planning; socio-cultural applications and effects; and information processing and exchange. Each group was asked to exchange information on ongoing projects and plans, so as to create an inventory of research and an informal network of researchers, but their main task was to evolve specific proposals for common research efforts.

45. In this process, the role of UNESCO was defined with considerable care. The function of the organization was seen not as conducting research in its own right, but rather acting as catalyst and facilitator, bringing together individuals and institutions and encouraging them to pool their efforts and extend the comparability of their research.

46. As anticipated, the two consultations produced somewhat different proposals, given their separate constituencies and the primary interest of researchers in Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Arab States in development applications of the new technologies. Themes emphasized at Ahmedabad included uses of the new technologies for teleconferencing, disaster warning, increased access for rural populations, the management of communication systems for development purposes, and the impact of direct broadcasting satellite transmissions in the regions concerned. At Gothenburg, on the other hand, much of the interest was in areas such as policy and decision-making processes for new technologies such as integrated service digital networks and communication satellites; the development of a system of European media indicators; issues of deregulation, media ownership and financing; privacy and questions of public access to and participation in the new communication technologies, and the need for well-planned comparative case-studies of their social effects.

47. Since these consultations were completed, collaborative projects have been initiated in Asia (linking research institutions in Australia, India, and Japan); in the Maghreb subregion and in Europe (linking Denmark, France, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands). Projects are also under active discussion in Africa and in other European countries.

48. Both consultations highlighted the second phase of the programme: synthesizing and distributing research results. It was generally agreed that this should be approached in two complementary ways - regionally and globally. In each of the regions, research institutions have been requested (under the guidance of UNESCO's regional culture and communication advisers) to prepare and distribute digests of work in progress. However, they have also been asked to adhere to a common format so that their work can later be synthesized by the UNESCO secretariat for international distribution. The first of these syntheses will be produced in late 1986.

49. It is anticipated that the project will continue into a third phase, until the end of the second medium-term plan in 1989, and that it will focus in its latter stages upon interregional studies, linking a number of the common themes that have emerged from research at the regional level.

50. Another aspect of UNESCO's programme in the field of communication technology is directly concerned with the acquisition of appropriate equipment and its endogenous production. The aim of the activities foreseen is to develop a range of broadcasting equipment, both for transmitting and receiving, the design of which is based on field experience and takes into account both the needs of users and the circumstances in which it will be used.

51. As part of this programme, a second phase of development of a solar radio receiver is envisaged, and plans are being prepared up to the pre-manufacturing level. Several stations in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and the Caribbean, are already using low-cost, 10-watt VHF transmitters designed by UNESCO, as well as relay stations powered by solar units.

52. In the interests of diversification, the equipment has been modified to meet the requirements of news agencies, with the transmitter used for news dissemination to clients, in association with an appropriate receiver.

53. All of these activities are conducted together with experts from both developed and developing countries, through workshops and orientation courses.

54. Negotiations are being pursued with various countries to install small manufacturing units for the production of such equipment and to develop the potential of local resources through special training courses. It is hoped that this project will be implemented in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
