

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY

FORTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records*



MAY 19 1987

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
23rd meeting
held on
Monday, 10 November 1986
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

UN/SPC/41/SR.23

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOUASSI (Togo)

later: Mr. IRTEMCELIK (Turkey)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 74: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued)

*This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/41/SR.23
17 November 1986
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/41/21, A/41/120 and Add.1, A/41/562 and Add.1, A/41/582 and Add.1)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued)

1. Mr. LIANG Yufan (China) observed that serious imbalances and irrationality still existed in the field of information and communication. The constructive endeavours of the developing countries to overcome their historical backwardness in that field and to preserve their cultural heritage had been overlooked, belittled or even distorted. Some countries, taking advantage of their monopoly, tried to impose on others their political convictions and lifestyles. Thus his country firmly supported the third world countries which rigorously and rightly demanded the establishment of a new information and communication order, which would not only help those countries to gain full political and economic independence but would also contribute to the enhancement of international understanding and co-operation.
2. Although complex, the task was an urgent one. Given the rapid advances in science and technology, the gap between the developing and developed countries would continue to widen unless the countries that were most advanced in the field of information entered into effective co-operation with the developing countries, on the basis of respect for national sovereignty and of equality and mutual benefit, and provided the latter with more assistance in such areas as technical equipment and training. The developing countries, for their part, should endeavour to improve and strengthen their communication infrastructure individually or collectively.
3. Some had already done so, in particular his own country. Over the past decades, by relying mainly on its own efforts, China had developed its co-operation with other countries, for experience had taught it that isolation and rejection of progress would only lead a country to stagnation. Through its policy of opening to the outside world and attempting to take advantage of the best work being done in other lands, his country sought not only to make material progress but also to build a culturally evolved society. It contributed to the extent of its modest means, but in a spirit of co-operation, to the information activities of the United Nations system, especially by rebroadcasting United Nations Bengali- Chinese- and English-language programmes in the region. On the occasion of the International Year of Peace, it had also prepared a special programme, which had been broadcast from New York on 24 October.
4. It was only natural that the information bodies of the United Nations system should deal with politics, since the United Nations was an important centre of international politics. In his delegation's opinion, their activities in that area were beyond reproach.

(Mr. Liang Yufan, China)

5. Despite the efforts undertaken to establish a new world information and communication order, much still remained to be done. His delegation was encouraged by the various constructive proposals recently made and was convinced that, if countries endeavoured to show a spirit of conciliation, it was still possible to achieve progress.
6. His delegation commended the Department of Public Information, which, with a reduced budget, had managed to preserve as many programmes as possible, and it wished to stress that with the current financial crisis all the available resources should be utilized to the full.
7. Mr. TERNOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that, if the United Nations could solve the problems related to information according to the wishes of the majority of the international community, it would make a tangible contribution to its main objective: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to mobilize States in promoting social and economic progress.
8. In the current turbulent times, when mankind must choose between peace and annihilation, the information media had a considerable responsibility. Objective and exhaustive treatment of the major issues of the day enhanced confidence and understanding, while disinformation and half-truths sowed mistrust and misunderstanding among peoples.
9. The information media could and should ask questions concerning such serious issues as disarmament and peace and should answer them using established facts, divergent viewpoints and conclusive arguments.
10. Like the United Nations and UNESCO, his country considered that the role of the information media was to serve the noble aspirations of mankind by promoting the emergence of a new political mentality, an anti-militarist and anti-nuclear mentality inspired not by vindictiveness but by the need to establish a comprehensive system of international peace and security.
11. It was regrettable that most of the mass media and information agencies in the West were not ready to follow that path. Using as a cover the slogan of "freedom of information", they cited dubious sources and rumours. With the aid of massive propaganda machinery equipped with sophisticated technological means, they systematically engaged in disinformation, stirring up suspicion and hostility among States and inflaming militarist attitudes. Such propaganda was aimed not at the human mind but at the instincts of the audience, or in the words of Lenin, not at common sense but at prejudices.
12. The "psychological warfare" being waged against the socialist and many developing countries was nothing more than a special form of aggression, of information imperialism which violated the sovereignty, history and culture of peoples. That was the only way to interpret the attempts by imperialism to make people look at every society that was out of imperialism's favour through a gun-sight: anti-Nicaraguan, anti-Afghan and anti-Syrian propaganda; the scandalous disinformation campaign against Libya with the blessing of the United States

(Mr. Ternov, Byelorussian SSR)

authorities; the false stories and lies concerning Chernobyl; the distortion or concealment, clearly not without guidance, of the real tenor of the Reykjavik meeting. Those were a vivid demonstration of the principle that "the best lies are made of half-truths".

13. It had to be stated that such imperialist propaganda was in violation of the principal resolutions of the United Nations, UNESCO and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The approach of the socialist countries took the opposite approach: their information media aimed at strengthening mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence and establishing good-neighbourliness between States, in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, United Nations resolutions, the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, the UNESCO Declaration of 1978 and the decisions of the Non-Aligned Movement.

14. The slowness in progress towards the establishment of the new world information and communication order legitimately demanded by the great majority of countries, was absolutely abnormal and might well increase still further the dependency of the developing countries. His country would continue to co-operate closely with the developing countries in order to enable them to break free of the information monopolies and attain genuine independence.

15. One of the key problems still facing the international community was the considerable inequality in the international information flows, which was demonstrated by the statistics and was unacceptable in the last decades of the twentieth century. The international community must actively support the efforts of the developing countries in that regard.

16. His delegation believed that several of the proposals and conclusions submitted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Committee on Information and the Director-General of UNESCO could be used for the drafting of resolutions aimed at achieving a tangible improvement of United Nations work in the field of information. It hoped that the Department of Public Information, despite the difficulties it was facing, would intensify its efforts aimed at implementing the pertinent General Assembly decisions.

17. Mr. KOLEV (Bulgaria) said that the media were gaining in importance owing to their vast potential for shaping opinion and orienting policies.

18. That had been emphasized by the representatives of 117 countries at the Tenth Congress of the International Organization of Journalists, held at Sofia from 20 to 23 October 1986. The Congress had also stressed that the post-Reykjavik international situation required more vigorous efforts in the struggle for peace, the reduction of nuclear and other arsenals and the non-militarization of outer space. It had launched an appeal for mobilization and had called upon all progressive journalists to strengthen their ties of solidarity with their confrères who were fighting for national liberation, democracy and the establishment of a new international information and communication order.

(Mr. Kolev, Bulgaria)

19. His country believed that the media must and could show people the way to peace at a time when mankind was faced with a fateful choice: either to change the outdated approach to the problems of peace, security and disarmament or perish in the flames of a nuclear conflagration. Experience had shown that balanced, objective and faithful information contributed to mutual understanding and co-operation among nations, while information misused, biased and subordinated to aggressive doctrines led to tension, mistrust and enmity and could become as dangerous a weapon than as any other.
20. Unfortunately, information was often tendentious, if not slanderous, and certain Western information centres were conducting psychological warfare, disinformation campaigns and a sort of information terrorism against socialist and developing countries, national liberation movements and the forces of peace, freedom and progress. It sufficed to mention the hateful campaign of slander unleashed in the West against Bulgaria concerning the so-called "Bulgarian connection" or other fabricated issues. The militaristic propaganda in favour of the arms race was no less harmful.
21. The time had come for the United Nations to elaborate international legal norms and principles to ensure sovereignty, equality and non-interference and prohibit militaristic and racist propaganda. Such norms, which should not be linked to any censorship or restriction, would not impair freedom of information.
22. The technological progress which had accompanied the unprecedented development of information had not reduced the enormous disparities between countries, which the figures eloquently demonstrated, and had not enabled the majority of developing countries to free themselves from the tenacious grip of the monopolies. In order to remedy that unacceptable situation, Bulgaria actively supported the demand of the developing countries for the restructuring of an international information system on a just and democratic basis. The best way to achieve that would be the adoption by the United Nations and UNESCO of the basic principles of a new world information and communication order and a programme of action in that regard.
23. The fortieth anniversary of UNESCO was an occasion for the international community to express its support for the efforts of that organization to strengthen peace and security and foster co-operation among States. His delegation hoped that the spirit of the compromise achieved so painstakingly at the thirteenth session of the General Conference of UNESCO, held at Sofia, would develop further.
24. Bulgaria, which was deeply concerned at the position adopted by certain delegations at the last session of the Committee on Information, which made any consensus impossible, expected that all its members would show a constructive approach enabling that Committee to fulfil its mandate.
25. The report of the Bulgarian National Committee for the International Year of Peace clearly showed that the Bulgarian media were contributing fully to the achievement of the noble objectives set by the United Nations on that occasion.

26. Mr. JOUSHAN (Afghanistan) said that the existing information and communication order was based on the domination of certain Western news agencies which enjoyed a virtual monopoly in the collection and dissemination of information. Thus, the exchange of information between developed capitalist countries and developing countries was a one-sided flow, creating an unjust and unbalanced situation. Consequently, the world-wide campaign for the establishment of a new, more just, more effective, and more balanced information order should be stepped up by helping developing countries to strengthen their information infrastructures and make full use of the scientific and technological advances in that field. The media had a particular role to play in preventing a nuclear catastrophe by showing the dangers entailed and opposing the imperialist concept of "limited nuclear war".

27. At the present time, the forces of world imperialism had a gigantic propaganda machine and their enormous network spent billions of dollars annually to misinform public opinion. The United States, for example, spent \$5 billion on propaganda and employed 350,000 persons for that purpose. As against the considerable resources at the disposal of the United States Information Agency, the Department of Defense, the Voice of America, "Radio Free Europe" and "Radio Liberty", the latter two stations being controlled by the CIA, half of the population of 60 developing countries had no access to newspapers, and, according to the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook for 1985, 35 countries and island countries did not receive television broadcasts. The least which could be said was that the exchange of information between the media of the developed countries and the developing countries was seriously unbalanced.

28. Furthermore, the forces of world imperialism, headed by the United States imperialists, used that formidable propaganda instrument in order to conceal their policy of State terrorism and wage undeclared wars against Afghanistan, Angola and Nicaragua in violation of all internationally accepted norms and principles. By calling mercenaries "freedom fighters" they tried to justify them and absolve them in the eyes of world public opinion. The New York Times itself admitted that a journalism training programme for Afghan refugees and the establishment of an Afghan information service was more "a propaganda effort" than training in journalism. Since the victory of the national democratic revolution in Afghanistan, the West, by broadcasting tendentious and totally fabricated information, had not ceased denying the reality of the April revolution and seeking to impair the friendly relations between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union. At the current time, more than 50 radio stations were transmitting hostile broadcasts to Afghanistan. The CIA had intensified its anti-Afghan and anti-Soviet propaganda through the subversive radio stations "Radio Liberty" and "Radio Free Europe", adding a new link in that chain with the new station called "Radio Free Afghanistan". The Voice of America broadcast information in Pashto and Dari, the two official languages of Afghanistan, and the BBC and Deutsche Welle added their voices to that concert of slander.

29. Afghanistan was not the only country subjected to such psychological warfare. "Radio Martí" was spreading slander against Cuba, and "Radio Liberty" and "Radio Free Europe" were doing the same against the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. An article in The New York Times dated 3 October 1986 shed light on the disinformation activities carried out by the Government against Libya and its

(Mr. Joushan, Afghanistan)

leader, Colonel Qaddafi. The inevitable conclusion was that those subversive activities and broadcasts constituted gross interference in the internal affairs of States.

30. The second Conference of the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Organization, held at Kabul from 9 to 14 April 1986, had dealt with the question of a new international information order in the service of peace and progress. In their final communiqué the participants in the Conference had urged all information specialists and organizations in the developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America to intensify their resistance to imperialist infiltration in the field of information and uphold the values, traditions and cultural identity of nations. Furthermore, after their Conference in Harare, the heads of State or Government of the non-aligned countries had reaffirmed the need to strengthen co-operation between non-aligned countries and other developing countries in the field of information and had welcomed the co-operation of UNESCO with the non-aligned countries, particularly with respect to the studies on information and communication problems, including the problem of the imbalance in the exchange of information between developing and developed countries. UNESCO was playing a significant role in the establishment of a new information and communication order and had helped strengthen the role of the press, radio and news agencies of different countries in order to consolidate peace, international understanding and friendship among peoples and nations. The withdrawal of the United States and some of its closest allies and their slander campaign were proof of their hostility towards an organization which sought to strengthen the role of developing countries in the field of information and communication.

31. The Department of Public Information, which had the task of informing world public opinion about United Nations activities, must, in order to enhance its effectiveness, work in close co-operation with UNESCO, the news agencies of non-aligned countries and other news agencies. DPI was the target of the United States, which spared no criticism concerning its activities, as was demonstrated by the Heritage Foundation Newsletter of 9 June 1986, because the documents published by the Department often opposed United States interests and criticized its policies. Everyone knew what the interests of the United States were, particularly the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, who saw their own interests reflected in those documents. Today, more than ever, the peoples of the world supported peace and disarmament, the elimination of racial discrimination, apartheid, racism and colonialism; the establishment of a new world information and communication order and a new world economic order; the peaceful use of outer space; and the struggle against nuclear war. Those objectives must be achieved in spite of imperialist propaganda, and the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin American which strove to achieve them enjoyed the support of the socialist and peace-loving countries.

32. His delegation deeply regretted the 500 per cent increase in transmission fees demanded by the Voice of America, which had been responsible for the suspension of the short-wave broadcasts from Headquarters. He hoped that the Department would continue to establish contact with other interested countries and radio

(Mr. Joushan, Afghanistan)

broadcasting organizations in order to continue to broadcast its programmes to the regions concerned. In conclusion, his delegation expressed its support for the very useful work of the Committee on Information and its agreement with the recommendations contained in its report (A/41/21).

33. Mr. Irtemcelik, Turkey took the Chair.

34. Mr. MUTO (Japan) said that freedom of information and communication was a fundamental norm guiding society and that the flow of information should not be artificially controlled. At the same time, Japan fully understood the desire of developing countries to eliminate existing imbalances in order to ensure a fairer and more balanced dissemination of information. That was the thrust of resolution 3.1 on the establishment of a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, which had been adopted at the twenty-third session of the General Conference of UNESCO.

35. His delegation had consistently held the view that the consensus language adopted in UNESCO should be respected in other United Nations forums. It believed that the Special Political Committee and the Committee on Information should work on the basis of that consensus rather than on the basis of controversial recommendations and resolutions. It hoped that it would be possible to reach consensus in all areas on which the Committee on Information was divided.

36. It was the task of the Department of Public Information to inform the international community of the important role which the United Nations was playing in maintaining peace and security and promoting the well-being of mankind. High expectations of the role of the United Nations on the part of the general public had often led the latter to accuse the Organization of a lack of objectivity and impartiality in the conduct of its work. His delegation appreciated the efforts of the Department to make the public more fully aware of the limitations and possibilities of the Organization through, for example, the publication of the booklet entitled "Image and Reality". The role of the Department in that regard should be further strengthened.

37. The Department should also engage in activities for the promotion of a free and well-balanced flow of information. The Committee on Information should study the activities of the Department from a wider perspective so as to focus its recommendations on the most appropriate activities.

38. The Department must orient its activities in accordance with General Assembly resolutions on political questions. The desire of each Member State for wider coverage to be given to matters which it deemed most important was understandable, but it should not be forgotten that the international community held a wide range of views on virtually every issue under consideration by the United Nations. The Department's information activities on political questions should be addressed in a way that would contribute to understanding among countries and not in a way that would engender antagonism.

(Mr. Muto, Japan)

39. Finally, he expressed the hope that the Committee would find practical and realistic solutions, because all its members agreed in recognizing the need to co-operate in developing the information and communication capabilities of developing countries and to support the activities of the Department of Public Information.

40. Mr. ADJOYI (Togo) recalled the mandate of the Committee on Information as contained in resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979 and expressed regret that, with a mandate which could not be clearer, the Committee had not been able to adopt any recommendations without a vote because of the desire of certain States to modify the Committee's mandate by the introduction of new concepts into the definition of the new information and communication order. His delegation considered that there was no need to modify the original mandate and deplored the fact that the members of the Committee had been unable to get beyond certain considerations so as to grasp more fully the purpose of the new information and communication order, which was intended to strengthen understanding among peoples and thus to promote a world of peace and security.

41. As however there was agreement on a number of recommendations, his delegation considered that the question of the definition, which represented one of the stumbling-blocks, should hamper the continuation of United Nations activities in the field of information and communication. It had noted with satisfaction that a good number of delegations had expressed their support for the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order, based on the free flow and broader and better-balanced dissemination of information, thus reflecting the essence of the mandate of the Committee on Information. The Committee should prepare a resolution acceptable to all on that basis.

42. His delegation was also convinced that the enhancement of the image of the United Nations system in the eyes of world public opinion called for the mobilization of all the material and human resources available to the international community, as well as the necessary political will for the attainment of such an objective. The documents before the Committee along with the statements which had been made on them seemed to indicate that progress had been made in that direction.

43. Finally, he wished to pay tribute to Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, who, despite the enormous difficulties faced by the Department of Public Information in accomplishing its daily tasks, had always accepted his responsibilities and had carried out with imagination, vision and devotion the policies and activities with which the General Assembly had charged him. His recent visit to Africa in order to study the problems of United Nations information centres bore witness to his will to promote better understanding among peoples, and the delegation of Togo invited members of the Committee to show such understanding with a view to overcoming the obstacles to the search for a new information and communication order and the achievement of a world of peace, harmony and justice.

44. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic) said that if Syria, like all other countries, attached great importance to the problem of information, it was because information influenced the thoughts and actions of men and, in the last analysis, guided the behaviour of States and communities. The Syrian Arab Republic, as a non-aligned developing country, was convinced that the establishment of a new world information and communication order would contribute to its development and would enable its people to enjoy a freer and more prosperous life.

45. The report of the Committee on Information (A/41/21) contained a detailed account of the general debate on the information question which had taken place in the Committee. His delegation gave its unreserved support to the positions expressed by the developing countries but, without going into detail, wished to draw attention to positions which were common to all those States.

46. Syria, like all the other developing countries, considered that the information media played an important role in the implementation of economic and social development plans. Immediately following decolonization a large number of African and Asian countries had succeeded, thanks to the media, in putting into effect ambitious economic and social development plans. The scientific and technical revolution which had taken place during the past 30 years had transformed the information bodies, which had previously addressed limited population groups, into mass media whose audience comprised entire populations. The current world information system was, however, based on the exclusive domination of a limited number of Western agencies which constituted the sole source of international information in the majority of developing States. That was a remnant of colonial domination, and Syria, just as it had fought for its political and economic freedom, believed that it must currently fight to make information free.

47. Freedom of information, which in the West constituted the foundation of democracy, was being used as a weapon to increase tension and create a climate conducive to aggression against developing States and national liberation movements. The media described national liberation movements as terrorist organizations and justified intervention in the domestic affairs of States which had chosen systems which opposed the interests and aspirations of imperialism.

48. Syria wished to see the establishment of a system which would facilitate equitable exchange between North and South, a system which would give the developing countries access to modern techniques without at the same time interfering in the economic, social and cultural affairs of those States. Events reported in the media currently reflected the political position of the States where the information was disseminated. The same event was presented in a completely different light depending on which country reported it.

49. The establishment of a new world information and communication order in no way meant the end of freedom of information. It simply meant the end of the exploitation of the media for political ends. In order for the establishment of a new world order to take place, all must make concessions and all parties must agree to co-operate. His delegation considered that care must be taken to ensure that information was impartial and that the injection of politics into the various issues with which information dealt must be avoided. The wish of the developing

(Mr. Glaiel, Syrian Arab
Republic)

States to see the establishment of a new world information and communication order reflected their desire to see the establishment of international peace and security as well as their aspirations for economic development and their condemnation of wars, the arms race, oppression and exploitation.

50. His delegation had listened with interest to the exhaustive statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Information, who had said that agreement in principle had been reached on the question of the role the Department of Public Information should play in the establishment of the new world information order. In that connection it was appropriate to emphasize that, despite the financial crisis and the difficulties which it faced in implementing the decisions, particularly the political decisions of the Organization, the Department had succeeded in carrying out the programme it had set for itself by setting its priorities and pursuing its policy towards the countries of the third world, which involved on the one hand providing information to those countries and, on the other hand, helping them create their own information media.

51. The United Nations, one of whose objectives was to deal with the problems threatening international peace and security, was duty-bound to tackle all aspects of those problems, in particular the information aspect. That was why it had to cover the developments in hot spots such as southern Africa and the Middle East. In defining the new world information and communication order, the international community should avoid being influenced by the negative attitude on the part of the upholders of the status quo - an attitude which had been criticized by the Committee on Information ever since its establishment.

52. His delegation had already raised the question of press releases, and would like to know the criteria governing summaries of delegations' statements.

53. Mr. AL-NESAFI (Kuwait) commended the activities of the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information, as well as UNESCO's efforts to improve the communications situation throughout the world, thanks in particular to its International Programme for the Development of Communication. The information revolution which had characterized the twentieth century was still, in the main, the exclusive property of the high-technology, industrialized countries, a situation which had led to a structural imbalance in that field between the developed and the developing countries, and to a virtual monopolization of the sources of information and the means of disseminating information. The developed countries should therefore use their technology to promote the development efforts of the third-world countries, and help them to lay the foundations for a new information order.

54. Information was the prime instrument for international co-operation and for the necessary co-ordination between the various elements of the international community. Instead of being a one-way commodity imposed from the outside, information should basically involve interactions and exchanges, and thus help to avoid incomprehension, which led to misunderstanding, which in turn led to conflict. Thus defined, information had a great role to play in the objective

(Mr. Al-Nesafi, Kuwait)

analysis of the world situation. That was why Kuwait reaffirmed the necessity of establishing a new world information and communication order, based, in particular, on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information.

55. The information and communications media also played a primordial role in the political stability of countries and in strengthening the national identity of peoples. His delegation therefore welcomed the recommendations of the Committee on Information, especially its recommendation No. 35, in which the Department of Public Information was requested to continue to cover adequately the Israeli policies and practices in the occupied Arab territories. The lack of objective and balanced information was the main cause of the biased state of public opinion in certain parts of the world regarding the Arabs and their causes, and was an obstacle to an equitable settlement of the Palestinian problem.

56. The States members of the Gulf Co-operation Council, wishing to focus on their joint heritage and to ensure that co-operation with the foreign media was based on respect for that heritage, as well as for Islamic values and the national interest, had adopted, at the session of the Council held in Abu Dhabi a code of deontology of information and standard rules regarding external information.

57. Mr. LOPEZ (Philippines) said that in 1950 he had served as a rapporteur on freedom of information and had undertaken a survey of conditions impeding the free flow of information around the world. The survey had sparked off a wide-ranging debate on freedom of the press and freedom of information in the relevant bodies of the United Nations. Most of the problems that had arisen then were still around, despite the efforts of the Committee on Information over the past 10 years. Against that background, his delegation reaffirmed its solidarity with the Group of 77 on the establishment of the new world information and communication order, and hoped that the Department of Public Information would, notwithstanding the current financial crisis, continue to give wider coverage to the political and economic issues which were widening the gap between the developed and the developing countries. The new information order was vital to the latter, for the persistent lack of agreement within the United Nations on that question only served to postpone indefinitely the establishment of the new international economic order, which was vital to the well-being of peoples.

58. In order to redress the current imbalance in the flow of information, the developed and the developing countries should combine their efforts. However, in view of the difficulties in realizing that goal, the developing countries could take initiatives, within the limits of their resources, to develop their own communications systems and thus hasten the establishment of the new information order. The Philippines had written into its new Constitution provisions relating to the establishment of communications structures suitable to the needs and aspirations of the nation and the balanced flow of information, both into and out of the country. The Constitution of the Philippines guaranteed the free flow of information on the basis of respect for freedom of speech and of the press. Other provisions, while reserving ownership and management of the mass media for citizens of the Philippines, regulated or prohibited monopolies when it was in the public interest, thus ensuring a diversity of sources of information and preventing abuse.

(Mr. López, Philippines)

59. Retracing the history of communications in his country and expressing the hope that its experience would be useful to other developing countries, he said that there was an urgent need in the third world to ensure a more balanced flow of information, which went hand in hand with guaranteeing freedom of speech, in accordance with the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in its article 19 in particular. With the restoration of freedoms, the Philippines had seen the emergence of a flourishing, free and diversified press, as evidenced by the existence of 24 daily newspapers published in Manila alone.

60. In view of the revolution in communications technology, there was an urgent need for the international community to place less stress on politically contentious questions, which were divisive and diverted attention from the main problem at issue, namely the establishment of a new order capable of promoting peace and understanding throughout the world. The new order must be based on the right of individuals and groups within nations, and of nations among themselves, to communicate with each other in a world where there existed a plurality of sources and channels of information ensuring that all views were disseminated despite differences in values, ideology and social systems. In that context, the delegation of the Philippines supported the important work done by the Committee on Information.

61. The international community must help the developing countries, whose resources were very limited, to acquire the infrastructure which would enable them to overcome the existing inequities in the ownership, control and management of the media. Meanwhile, the media must make responsible use of the enormous power at their command in order to improve the human condition, promote understanding between peoples and maintain international peace and security.

62. Mr. TOMASZEWSKI (Poland) said that the Committee on Information, which had met at the beginning of the summer, had been unable to achieve any progress because of the stubborn opposition of certain Member States to the establishment of a new world information and communication order that would be more just, more effective and democratic. It appeared that the lively discussions on the very definition of the new world order were only an excuse for preventing the establishment of a new order in accordance with the resolutions adopted on that subject by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

63. Poland had always considered that it was only the conduct of the States, international organizations and other participants in international affairs which could contribute constructively to - or conversely impede - the establishment of a peaceful international order in the world. Poland, for its part, was opposed to the launching of virulent propaganda campaigns and other forms of interference in the internal affairs of States, because those practices were inconsistent with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. That position had been reaffirmed by the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty at Budapest in June 1986.

64. Poland had always encouraged the free exchange of information in accordance with the principles of international law. European regional solutions, especially in the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, merited special attention, whereas disinformation campaigns against other countries were

/...

(Mr. Tomaszewski, Poland)

inadmissible in international relations. Poland was also opposed to all activity for the dissemination of information through media established in foreign territory adjacent to other countries, with a view to destabilizing those countries. The Polish language programmes broadcast to Poland by the so-called "Radio Free Europe" station did not contribute in any way to the strengthening of international co-operation, peace or security.

65. Poland fully understood the fears of the developing countries and, like the representative of Mali, considered that communication and information should be decolonized in accordance with the relevant resolutions of UNESCO and the United Nations.

66. Poland supported the expanded activities the Department of Public Information was carrying out in particularly difficult circumstances. It was particularly gratified by the conclusion, in the spring of 1986, of an agreement with the United Nations providing for the opening of a United Nations information centre in Warsaw.

67. Poland had always appreciated and supported the work of UNESCO in the sphere of information and communication. It had noted with great satisfaction the announcement in the report submitted by the Director-General of UNESCO (A/41/582) of the forthcoming publication of a comprehensive historical survey of documents dealing with a new world information and communication order.

68. Mrs. BRABCOVA (Czechoslovakia) recalled that the strengthening of peace and security was a basic prerequisite of any further progress, and that the socialist countries had submitted to that year's session of the General Assembly a comprehensive programme aimed at guaranteeing international peace and security which covered all spheres, including information and communication. Depending on whether it was objective or biased, true or false, information could either promote friendship and co-operation among peoples or provoke hostility and distrust. Therefore, the consideration of issues related to information should not be confined to technical matters, but should also extend to the content and orientation of the information itself.

69. Czechoslovakia was in favour of the establishment of a new world information and communication order that would provide all countries, including the developing countries, with means of disseminating accurate information on local events, of expressing their views on international affairs and of defending themselves against slanderous and subversive campaigns which were detrimental to their legitimate interests. Such an order should also provide for a greater diversity of sources of information, and ensure the free flow of accurate, objective and comprehensive information, without impeding the development of new communication technology for peaceful purposes.

70. Regrettably, the existing situation was very different; most information networks were controlled by monopolies based in western States where certain circles, which were striving for supremacy in other spheres as well, were endeavouring to maintain the status quo in the sphere of information. The developing countries had only very limited means of making their opinions known to the world, and the media tended to project a distorted image of the developing

(Mrs. Brabcova, Czechoslovakia)

countries, to divert public attention from the genuine problems by highlighting "sensational" news, and to disregard completely, or even defame, the successes achieved in the socialist and developing countries. The Special Political Committee and the Committee on Information must therefore continue to concern themselves with the principles underlying a more just and more democratic world information and communication order.

71. The Department of Public Information and the United Nations information centres played an important role in informing the world public on the work and aims of the Organization, and their reporting must therefore be a model of objective, balanced and impartial news coverage. The Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had already made commendable efforts to that end, despite existing financial constraints; however, such constraints must not be invoked as a pretext for weakening the principles underlying the work done by the Department, or for curtailing the implementation of priority programmes laid down by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The objectivity and impartiality of the Department could certainly be enhanced by redressing the existing imbalance in its staff. In that connection, the delegation of Czechoslovakia noted with concern that the States of Eastern Europe were still underrepresented.

72. Czechoslovakia commended the efforts made by UNESCO to establish a more just and more democratic system of international exchange of information, and reaffirmed its unreserved support for the work of the Organization on the occasion of its fortieth anniversary. Czechoslovakia would do its utmost to promote co-operation among States in all spheres, including communication and information.

73. Mr. RADENKOVIC (Yugoslavia) stressed the importance of information in the development of international relations, and observed that the existing information and communication system did not meet the international community's needs because it was based on inequality and injustice and was monopolized by the more powerful participants in the system. The data provided by ITU clearly illustrated the extent of the imbalance in the international distribution of means of information and communication. Such inequalities, which were prejudicial to the non-aligned countries, must be eliminated because no single nation - whatever its economic and military power or its level of technological development - could be allowed to enjoy a monopoly of information. It was therefore necessary to establish a new world information and communication order based on the need to provide comprehensive, objective and accurate information, and on the establishment of more equitable relations in respect of the sources of information and means of communication. That was what the non-aligned and developing countries were demanding, yet it did not mean that they were seeking confrontation with the information systems of the developed countries.

74. The non-aligned and developing countries had made considerable efforts to strengthen mutual co-operation in the field of information and communication; with the assistance and support of the information systems of the United Nations and of the developed countries, they had been able to make use of their own resources and had achieved significant results. However, they wished to go further and secure access, on an equal footing, to the international information and communication system.

(Mr. Radenkovic, Yugoslavia)

75. The Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies comprised more than 90 agencies, which were co-operating in an effort to strengthen their information systems and increase the volume of the information they disseminated throughout the world. The Eco-Pool service had been set up specially for the purpose of supplementing information activities in the spheres of the economy, trade and finance. The co-operation between the Pool and the Department of Public Information was also very important and useful; indeed, his delegation had already had an opportunity to express its satisfaction with the training programme organized by the Department for the benefit of young journalists from developing countries, and hoped that the programme, part of which had been conducted in Yugoslavia, would be continued.

76. Yugoslavia supported UNESCO, whose activities, especially its International Programme for the Development of Communication, provided invaluable assistance to the developing countries in the development of their communication systems. All forms of co-operation between the Department of Public Information and UNESCO were desirable, as had been shown by the round table on a new international information and communication order they had jointly organized. It was to be hoped that the third round table would be organized as soon as possible.

77. Development Forum and the World Newspaper Supplement provided useful information on the problems confronting the developing countries, and efforts should be made to ensure that their publication was continued. Yugoslavia supported the opening of new United Nations information centres, and considered that the role of the Department of Public Information should be strengthened by providing it with the resources it needed to carry out the tasks entrusted to it by the General Assembly. The decision to discontinue some of the Department's activities should be reconsidered, and those activities should be resumed as soon as possible. As to the Committee on Information, the serious difficulties it had encountered in the course of its work were not insuperable, and Yugoslavia would continue its efforts to work out compromise solutions.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.