



1986 COLLECTION

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KOUASSI (Togo)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

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

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

(c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of members of the Committee to the documentation on agenda item 74 and, in particular, to the two letters from the representatives of Bulgaria and Panama contained in documents A/41/425 and A/41/494 respectively.

2. Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) said that, while the concept of a new world information and communication order would seem to require more precise definition, its basic thrust was sufficiently clear and there was agreement among Member States concerning the action to be taken by the Secretariat to promote its establishment.

3. In connection with the implementation of the information component of resolutions such as those relating to the questions of Namibia, apartheid and Palestine, it should be noted that the Department's information programmes were scrutinized by the political bodies concerned, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee.

4. Given the financial crisis, the Secretariat expected, at best, a zero-growth budget allocation for information. That would not prevent the Department from resolutely pursuing its activities. It would even endeavour to turn the adverse situation into a new opportunity for a critical re-examination of its resources with a view to their optimum utilization.

5. Such re-examination always involved a painful choice between several options of equal importance, but the Department had always established its priorities in an objective manner, guided as it was by the Charter and the mandates it received from the General Assembly and the Committee on Information. Even where it had made use of its discretionary power, it had always done so in full awareness of different points of view and the actual needs, requirements and effectiveness of its programmes.

6. Information was a vital function for any organization and was particularly so for the United Nations which, because of the moral character of its activities and its focus on the problems of the emerging world community, required that Governments and public opinion should fully understand its activities. Information was also one of the most effective means of promoting international peace and development for all. The achievement of such objectives, however, required a

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certain pragmatism, and an acceptable information policy for the United Nations must be defined as precisely as possible. In the search for such a policy, the Committee would provide the Department with the means necessary to carry out its challenging mission. The Department's catalytic role should be further emphasized so that it could continue to offer a universal forum to the media organizations of all countries for the joint production and exchange of programmes bearing on the most urgent international issues.

7. The Department had every intention of continuing with the "Agenda for Small Planet" (a global consortium of television networks) and with the World Newspaper Supplement. Inter-agency co-operation in information was being pursued in the framework of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), which continued to finance the publication of Development Forum and the activities of the Non-Governmental Organizations Section. The organizations of the United Nations system, well aware of the current crisis in international relations, had devoted the April 1986 session of JUNIC to an in-depth examination of the role of information activities in the present climate of opinion and had adopted a series of recommendations. That programme of action had recently been endorsed by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination.

8. One unique feature of the Department was that more than one half of its staff worked away from Headquarters in numerous information centres throughout the world. After recalling the important considerations that underlay the establishment of those centres (General Assembly resolution 13 (I)), he went on to say that there were now 69 such centres, 51 of them headed by full-time directors and the remainder under the authority of UNDP Resident Representatives.

9. The scope of activities at all centres had been deeply affected by the financial crisis at a time when it was more important than ever for all sectors of public opinion to be informed of the Organization's activities. Suggestions had been made that the number of centres should be reduced, particularly in developing countries, or that they should be merged with UNDP offices. The rationale for establishing and maintaining information centres in developed and developing countries was different. In developing countries, Governments often assumed part of the costs of information centres, which served as a supplementary means of informing the public on world events and, in particular, on United Nations activities. On the other hand, in the industrialized countries, information centres did not normally receive significant assistance from host countries. The task entrusted to them was none the less an important one, particularly in countries where the work of the Organization was often misunderstood.

10. Suggestions had been made for a regional approach to the location of information centres, but Member States had objected in view of the political, cultural and geographical differences among countries of the same region. Moreover, the paucity of resources available often adversely affected coverage of countries far from the centre's immediate location. Merging the activities of the centres with those of UNDP would hardly improve the dissemination and analysis of information, since UNDP was preoccupied more with development issues than with issues such as disarmament, peace and security, apartheid and human rights. The

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closure of information centres that did not meet standards of effectiveness was conceivable in certain cases. No net increase in their number could, at any rate, be considered in current circumstances.

11. The Department of Information was undertaking a number of activities with a view to the establishment of a new world information and communication order. They included programmes of assistance to developing countries in strengthening their information and communications media.

12. In its awareness of the prime importance of the contribution young information and communication professionals could make to nation-building and to fostering international co-operation, the Department would continue its training programme for journalists and broadcasters from developing countries. It would also continue to co-operate with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, and such co-operation had now been extended to include contributions to the Eco-Pool. An Information Officer of the Department had attended the eleventh session of the Co-ordinating Committee and the Fourth General Conference of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, which had been held at Havana from 17 to 22 March 1986. Representatives of two agencies belonging to the Pool had also been invited to the Department's 1986 Editor's Round Table. A representative of the Pool had also been invited to participate in the second round table on a new world information and communication order held at Copenhagen from 2 to 7 April 1986.

13. In order to highlight the important special session of the General Assembly on the critical economic situation in Africa, the Department of Public Information had reordered its priorities to undertake an extensive information programme on the efforts of African countries to recover from the crisis and their needs. More information on the activities of the programme could be found in document A/41/562 (paras. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14).

14. In accordance with the request made by the General Assembly in resolution 40/164, the English version of the UN Chronicle now appeared on time, and the backlogs with respect to the other five versions had been all but eliminated. But, because of the financial crisis at the United Nations, the English, French, Spanish and Arabic versions of the UN Chronicle would henceforth only appear quarterly. All necessary steps were being taken to ensure the objectivity and accuracy of the information disseminated through the UN Chronicle, as well as the Department's other outputs.

15. Programmes in film and radio had also suffered cutbacks owing to the financial difficulties. Radio programmes in Greek, Hebrew, Lingala, Somali, Urdu, Philippino, Portuguese (to Portugal) and Serbo-Croat had had to be suspended. Owing to the discontinuance of short-wave broadcasts from Headquarters, the Committee on Information requested the Department to contact interested countries and radio broadcasting organizations in order to examine ways and means to resume, at favourable conditions for the Organization, short-wave broadcasting for which the Department of Public Information had in the past bought time on a rental basis. The Department of Public Information had contacted several broadcasting organizations in developing countries that had very strong short-wave transmitters

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with a request for free-of-charge broadcasts of weekly United Nations news programmes in a variety of languages spoken in the regions concerned. Following those contacts, Radio Beijing and the Voice of Nigeria had agreed to the requests. The Government of Argentina had also given an affirmative response. Further contacts were continuing with a view to ensuring adequate United Nations radio coverage for the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean.

16. In conclusion, he reiterated his appeal to the Committee to give clear guidelines and priorities so that the Secretariat could better discharge its duties.

17. Mr. SCHLEGEL (German Democratic Republic), introducing the report of the Committee on Information (A/41/21) in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee, said that the proposals of the Group of 77 had constituted the foundation for its work at the meeting held on substantive questions. The Committee had encountered three fundamental problems. It had not been possible to reach agreement on the most controversial question, that of the definition of the world information and communication order. It should be noted that the Group of 77 had shown considerable accommodation with regard to the inclusion of formulations from Economic and Social Council resolutions in its document. Unfortunately, not all parties had displayed such good will.

18. No agreement had been reached either on the question of financing a number of activities of the Department of Public Information and on paragraphs on southern Africa and Palestine. It had, therefore, been necessary to take a vote, and the 57 recommendations had been adopted by 41 votes to 11, with 5 abstentions. The results obscured the fact, however, that it would have been possible to reach an agreement, at least in the Working Group, on more than 50 paragraphs.

19. No decisions had been taken on the draft recommendations of other groups or the draft recommendation forwarded by Mongolia on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of UNESCO (annexes II, III, and IV of the report (A/41/21)).

20. The delegation of Costa Rica had submitted a draft declaration on the International Year of Peace, which the Committee had adopted by consensus. The emphasis therein was placed on the important influence that information and communication had on international relations and co-operation.

21. In a letter addressed to the Chairman of the Committee on Information, the Republic of Malta had stated its desire to be represented on the Committee on Information. The Special Political Committee should give due consideration to that fact when elaborating the resolution.

22. The Committee would only be able to accomplish its task of reaching agreement on the fundamental questions of the international exchange of information and the establishment of a new world information and communication order if its members showed patience and a real spirit of conciliation. Consensus should not be made the precondition of work, because it could only grow from dialogue, and the Committee of Information had been established precisely with that in mind.

23. Mrs. ZAHER (Deputy Assistant Director-General, Culture and Communication Sector, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), introducing the report of the Director-General of UNESCO 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 the social, economic and cultural effects of the accelerated development of communication technologies (A/41/582), drew attention to the most recent developments since the report had been drafted, particularly, the decisions taken and views expressed at the recently held one hundred twenty-fifth session of UNESCO's Executive Board.

24. Since its creation, out of a total of 370 projects submitted to it, the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) had contributed to 209 projects out of the Special Account. Of that number, 109 had been national projects and 100 had been regional or interregional. The percentage figure was 56 per cent of the projects submitted (68 per cent of the regional projects and 50 per cent of the national projects). However, owing to the scarcity of funds, IPDC had been able, in absolute terms, to allocate only \$10,729,000 (and not \$12,641,000 as indicated in the report) out of the \$61,326,500 requested for project financing. Of that total, 22 per cent had been for training, 21 per cent for the development of research and training centres, 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.

25. Two other points regarding the International Programme for Development of Communication deserved to be underlined. Firstly, during its seventh session, held in January 1986, the Intergovernmental Council of IPDC had decided to finance the publication of a periodic report on the state of communication in the world (now entitled World Communication Report). That was to be essentially a factual document, bringing together statistical data and summaries of current developments in the communication and information field. Such a publication would be an invaluable reference tool not only for all those interested in the development of communication but also for planners and decision-makers. As emphasized by the IPDC Bureau at its meeting in August 1986, the target audience of IPDC and its members should be borne continually in mind, the focus of the report being upon practical utility. That profile had been reaffirmed in the decisions of the Executive Council at its one hundred twenty-fifth session. The Council had also emphasized that the activities relating to further development of the periodic report on the state of communication in the world should be designed in the light of the evaluation which was to be made of the experimental version of that report.

26. Moreover, the most crucial problem facing IPDC was still that of resources; the number of projects submitted for financing was growing rapidly while contributions to the Special Account were at a standstill. In 1986, the President of the IPDC Council and the Director-General of UNESCO had drawn the attention of member States to that problem, which threatened seriously to hinder future programme activities. At its one hundred and twenty-fifth session, the Executive Board had therefore appealed again to member States, international organizations and Agencies of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental and

(Mrs. Zaher)

non-governmental organizations and professional groups, to strengthen, by means of voluntary contributions, the financial resources of the Special Account of IPDC.

27. As to UNESCO's programme on the establishment of a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, she recalled that, since the previous report had been submitted, the second round table on a new world information and communication order, convened jointly by the United Nations Department of Public Information and UNESCO, had been held in Copenhagen from 2 to 7 April 1986 at the invitation of the Government of Denmark and with the co-operation of the Danish National Commission for UNESCO. Participants had almost unanimously agreed on a number of suggestions concerning the practical aspects of a new world information and communication order, such as international co-operation in training and the further training of communication professionals in the developing countries, the encouragement of those countries' domestic communication development, especially the production of software, the further sensitization of media professionals and the general public to communication needs and possibilities through research, discussions and publications such as the UNESCO/IPDC World Communication Report. The round table had amply confirmed that the consideration of a new world information and communication order as an evolving and continuous process was in line with the requirements of a heterogeneous, pluralistic world in which all voices had the right to be heard. The round table had been characterized by a spirit of respect for mutual differences, and participants had expressed the conviction that a new world information and communication order could be achieved only through closer intellectual and practical co-operation among all the parties concerned.

28. In line with the Executive Board's decision to the effect that activities relating to a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, should mainly focus on promoting the evaluation and dissemination of the results of previous work, UNESCO was concentrating on the preparation of a chronological survey of the documents which had dealt with a new world information and communication order since the inception of the idea at the beginning of the 1970s. That survey would include the documents adopted by international professional and non-governmental organizations and by intergovernmental bodies and should prove to be a valuable reference on the subject.

29. Turning to the social, economic and cultural impact of the rapid development of communication technology, she drew attention to paragraphs 37 to 54 of the report (A/41/582).

30. In connection with the International Year of Peace and the efforts made by the international community to put an end to apartheid in South Africa, it was important to mention the work done by UNESCO to increase public awareness of various issues such as human rights, disarmament and peace and such major world problems as famine, sickness, poverty and ecological hazards. The broadcasting of programmes on apartheid on television in Africa was being studied, in co-operation with regional professional institutions and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. In that area also, primary emphasis was being placed on the media as "consciousness-raising" agents and on the positive role that they could play in the struggle against apartheid.

31. Mr. BAALI (Algeria) observed that the existing information order was intolerable because it perpetuated injustice and inequality and was conducive to the exploitation and marginalization of the third world. The developing countries were therefore endeavouring to establish a new world information and communication order that would be more just and effective, as an integral part of their struggle for the establishment of a new, democratic and equitable international economic order. The inequity which characterized international relations and which was the cause of the serious problems confronting the developing countries, was also prevalent in the sphere of information. Indeed, the developing countries emerged from the state of anonymity in which they were expected to remain only on the occasion of tragic events which, in most cases, involved the great Powers.

32. The developing countries refused to be docile consumers of foreign cultural products and demanded the establishment of a new order that would respect the identity of their peoples and their own values and offer a wider range of information, taking into consideration the aspirations and concerns of the developing countries. The mock trial of the new world order which was being called for, as well as the dark designs attributed to it, reflected deliberate attempts to prevent its establishment. Certain parties appeared determined to undermine all the achievements secured during the 1970s. Criticism was sharp, and the debate impassioned. Yet, the developing countries, while advocating the establishment of the new order, had never sought to gag the press or prevent journalists from doing their work freely. The documents adopted by the United Nations, UNESCO and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, especially UNESCO resolution 4/19, which had been adopted by consensus, contained neither direct nor indirect references to censorship or the restriction of freedoms, and the fears expressed were therefore unjustified.

33. The Committee on Information had concluded its work with an admission of failure. Yet agreement on the definition of the new world order could have been reached if only there had been sufficient will to overcome the rigid positions and tactical manoeuvres and give full consideration to the concerns of all the States. Thoughtful proposals based on the consensus maintained by the States members of UNESCO since 1980 had offered an honourable compromise, which could have appeased the feelings exacerbated by long and useless polemics. It was regrettable that certain countries had persisted in their intransigence and had thereby made it impossible to reach an agreement by continuing to insist on a wording which had admittedly been adopted by the States members of UNESCO in well-known circumstances but whose adequacy had been seriously called in question by the Group of 77.

34. To state that the existing information order could only be reformed through an involving and continuous process was tantamount to accepting the situation as it stood and recognizing that the industrialized countries would retain their tremendous technological advantage forever. In other words, it was tantamount to assuming responsibility, before history, for condemning the third world to acceptance of its own marginalization and the definitive supremacy of the industrialized world. A compromise solution should be worked out to break the deadlock, which had lasted too long, and the developing countries were prepared to make further efforts. Such a compromise would have the advantage of allowing the Committee on Information to devote its attention to more concrete matters.

(Mr. Baali, Algeria)

35. Other questions also coming within the scope of the Department of Public Information, such as the question of Namibia and that of Palestine and the problem of apartheid gave rise to differences of opinion. The Committee on Information should ask the Department to treat those questions in an appropriate manner. Regarding the argument that the Committee, by devoting part of its efforts to extraneous matters unrelated to its mandate, would turn into a political body, the point was that it could not be other than a political body. The questions that it dealt with, namely problems of information and the establishment of a new world information and communication order, were highly political questions. If the Committee were to be relieved of the above three so-called "political" problems, it could still not be considered as dealing with technical questions. Those who opposed mentioning such so-called "political problems" did not hesitate to welcome a paragraph on terrorism, which was a highly political problem.

36. Regarding the question of the financing of new activities, some delegations had shown great rigidity by arguing that the Organization's budget not grow any further. The Group of 77 had nevertheless endeavoured to avoid any new expenditure for the Department's budget and to ensure, through better management of activities and more efficient implementation and follow-up of programmes, that the recommendations of the Committee on Information were duly implemented once they had been approved by the General Assembly. By opposing the implementation of new programmes aimed primarily at third world countries, those delegations were trying to divest the Committee and the Department of their responsibilities. After listening to the important statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, his delegation reaffirmed its support for the Department of Public Information. While progress had indeed been made in implementing General Assembly resolutions and spreading the Organization's message of peace and progress, efforts should be intensified, particularly during the present difficult period when the United Nations system was facing growing and very harmful hostility and lack of understanding in some circles. The Department of Public Information had the means to apply a rational and efficient policy in that field. It had a vast network of information centres which could help to spread information about the work, purposes and principles of the United Nations among the world public, especially in the industrialized countries. In the same way the fruitful co-operation which had taken place between the Department and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies should continue, with a view to promoting the establishment of a new world information and communication order, an increase in the aid provided to the developing countries in the field of information, and the distribution of information about the United Nations.

37. He stressed the important part played by UNESCO, particularly through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), which was making a significant contribution towards promoting the establishment of a new world order, and he endorsed the continued publication of Development Forum and the World Newspaper Supplement, which provided very valuable information on third world countries and on United Nations activities. His delegation deplored the fact that the establishment of a new order was still a distant objective, and that the

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dependence of the developing countries in that sphere was becoming still more marked. Despite that record, rendered still more dismal by the deterioration in the developing countries' economic situation, which augured an orientation of the inequalities where information was concerned, his delegation remained convinced that the efforts being made could bear fruit if dialogue prevailed.

38. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said his country had always held that the principles of free access to information and of freedom of opinion, whether of the press or of other media, were among the cornerstones of any democratic national and international political system. Freedom of information was thus one of the fundamental rights enshrined in the Austrian Constitution. While it was understandable that the developing countries were seeking to remedy what they perceived as an unfair international communication situation, Austria believed that a New World Information and Communication Order had to be seen as a continuous and evolving process - a concept on which consensus had emerged within UNESCO. One important means of remedying the existing imbalances would be to help the developing countries acquire the necessary infrastructure. Austria would continue to work in that direction by encouraging the Austrian teaching institutions in particular to provide training facilities for journalists from developing countries and by fostering co-operation between the Austrian Press Agency and third world news agencies.

39. International co-operation was obviously indispensable in bringing about a more widespread flow of information. The European countries were planning co-operation in that field and possibly the drafting of a common policy on the mass media. A Ministerial Conference on the subject was scheduled to take place in Vienna in December 1986.

40. Austria, wishing to promote international co-operation in that field too, had participated for the first time in the work of the Committee on Information as an observer. Although the Committee had been unable to reach a consensus, many delegations had shown flexibility and understanding. It was to be hoped that the spirit of conciliation would prevail and enable significant results to be achieved.

41. Mr. MORTIMER (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), speaking on behalf of the twelve member States of the European Community, said that freedom of thought, opinion and expression were basic human rights which depended upon access to a multiplicity of sources of information. Communication and information could not be made subservient to a Government's policies; in a free society the media reflected public opinion, monitored national activities and freely criticized the Government. It was against that background that the work of the Department of Information, including in particular its efforts to promote a new world information and communication order seen as an evolving and continuous process, should be reviewed.

42. While they shared the legitimate concerns of the developing countries on the issue of disinformation, the Twelve could not accept proposals designed to impose censorship or other restrictions. The free circulation of information was part and parcel of the democratic process and served the cause of international peace.

(Mr. Mortimer, United Kingdom)

There was no contradiction, but rather complementarity, between freedom of information, the existence of professional standards and the right of each national community to communicate in its own language and preserve its own culture. The Twelve were aware that access to sources of information was linked to the level of economic development and stood ready to consider the adoption of new measures which might be necessary to correct the imbalance in international communication resources. Several of them already had programmes aimed specifically at meeting the communications needs of the third world. The Twelve had welcomed the setting up of the International Programme for the Development of Communication under UNESCO auspices. That Programme should serve as a co-ordinating mechanism for assessing needs and resources, establishing priorities and facilitating international co-operation for development in that field. The Twelve also attached importance to the activities of the Department of Public Information that contributed to the information and communication capabilities of the developing world.

43. The Department also had a crucial role to play in securing the understanding and support of the peoples of the world for the activities and objectives of the United Nations. Its efforts to promote economic, social and cultural development were particularly important and higher priority should be given to the dissemination of information on economic and social issues, since some 80 per cent of United Nations activities took place in those fields. The Twelve supported strongly the continued publication of Development Forum and called on all United Nations specialized agencies to contribute to it financially. The Department of Public Information should also attach particular importance to promoting awareness of issues relating to human rights, given the frequent violation of those rights in many areas of the world.

44. It was also essential that the Department adhere to the highest standards in terms of quality of output, impartiality and the need to reflect all points of view objectively. In view of the financial crisis, the Department should make increased efforts to identify priority programmes and avoid waste and duplication in order to finance new programmes from existing resources. The Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had already taken steps in that direction. Greater emphasis must also be placed on evaluation and follow-up and on the rationalization of activities both at Headquarters and in the information centres. The Group of 18 had made a number of recommendations in that connection in its report to the General Assembly.

45. The Twelve regretted that the Committee on Information had once again failed to agree on a set of recommendations and when it had been unable to combine the three sets of recommendations before it, had decided to vote on one of them rather than append all three to its report. Progress could be made if the Committee concentrated its efforts on practical work instead of on the most controversial issue, that of defining the concept of the new world information and communication order. A definition of that order as an evolving and continuous process had in fact been agreed on by UNESCO member States. The Twelve believed that it was time to set aside the conceptual debate on that issue. The definition of the new order was not the only task before the Committee on Information, however. The financial crisis made it imperative that the Committee rationalize the activities of the

(Mr. Mortimer, United Kingdom)

Department of Public Information. Useful work could be done by preparing guidelines to facilitate the setting of priorities. Information and communication should bring States closer together, not divide them. It was still possible to reach a consensus on that issue, provided that all concerned showed the necessary political will.

46. Mr. DOLJINTSEREN (Mongolia) said that his delegation attached great importance to information, the role of which had expanded greatly as a result of the technological revolution. Information was a two-edged sword, however, which could be used for reprehensible purposes. Mongolia had always believed that information should be used to maintain international peace and security, but now that the threat of war was growing, the information media had a crucial role to play in saving mankind from thermonuclear disaster by ending the arms race and securing disarmament. His delegation was deeply convinced that the mass media should serve primarily to mobilize world public opinion in the cause of peace, disarmament and increased co-operation among States. Unfortunately, far from serving that purpose and on the pretext of "freedom of information", the Western media frequently disseminated falsehoods and slander against sovereign States and interfered in their internal affairs. Those media were used to wage psychological warfare against States whose politics and social system were unpalatable to imperialism. One had only to consider, for example, the role of such radio stations as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, which slandered the socialist States, or Radio Martí, which interfered in Cuba's internal affairs. It was inadmissible that information media should be used to heighten international tension and destabilize sovereign States through hostile propaganda. Those subversive activities must be regarded as aggression against the States concerned. One way to improve the international climate would therefore be to prohibit such aggression.

47. International information must also be used to eradicate the remaining vestiges of colonialism, eliminate racial discrimination and apartheid and contribute to the socio-economic development of the developing countries and the establishment of a new international economic order. In that connection, his delegation attached great importance to the establishment of a new international information and communication order, which should eliminate the last vestiges of colonialism and put an end to the hegemony of imperialism.

48. For there to be total decolonization, there must be not only political and economic decolonization but also intellectual decolonization. Mongolia supported the non-aligned countries in their efforts to restructure the communication order. In particular, it supported the Political Declaration of the Eighth Conference of Heads of States or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, which had reaffirmed the need to further strengthen co-operation among the non-aligned countries and other developing countries in the fields of information and the media, in order to establish the new world information and communication order (A/41/697-S/18392).

49. The activities of UNESCO figured prominently among the efforts which the international community was making to establish the new world information order. His delegation supported UNESCO fully for the practical contribution that it was making to the development of international co-operation, particularly in the field of information.

(Mr. Doljintseren, Mongolia)

50. One of the most important tasks facing the media was to strengthen regional co-operation among States. Because of its geographical situation, Mongolia attached special significance to good neighbourly relations among the Asian States and to the strengthening of international peace and security in the Asia and the Pacific region. The President of the Presidium of the Great People's Khural of the Mongolian People's Republic had stated, in his report to the Nineteenth Party Congress, that co-operation with a view to strengthening security on the Asian continent and enhancing mutual understanding and co-operation among the States of the region was one of the principal goals of Mongolia's foreign policy. That was why Mongolia had proposed the drafting and signing of a convention on non-aggression and non-use of force in relations among the States of Asia and the Pacific.

51. His country strove to attain those objectives through the activities of the Mongolian information media, in particular, the Montsame press agency, which played an active role within the Organization of Asian-Pacific News Agencies and also participated in exchanges of information with the organizations of other countries in the region.

52. Mongolia considered the work done by the Committee on Information in the past year very positive. Although it had not reached a consensus, that Committee had formulated in its report (A/41/21) a large number of important recommendations. Mongolia supported those recommendations and hoped that the Special Political Committee would adopt them.

53. Mr. STROMHOLM (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said that in the present crisis the production and the distribution of impartial and objective information on the work of the United Nations became more vital than ever. The Department of Public Information, which was doing positive work in the field of factual reporting in such publications as Development Forum, should be encouraged to co-operate more actively with world media, within current economic constraints. Since it did not have unlimited resources, the Department should decide carefully on its priorities and concentrate on the most essential tasks. Importance should be attached to information about economic and social questions, and the educational work of the United Nations information centres should be strengthened. The need to create or restore confidence in the Organization by making its achievements better known could not be sufficiently stressed.

54. In order to streamline operations and reduce duplication, the Joint United Nations Information Committee should be strengthened as an instrument for inter-agency co-ordination and co-operation. In that connection, the two Non-Governmental Liaison Services in New York and Geneva were making a valuable contribution by providing information on international development issues to target audiences in the industrialized countries.

55. The Nordic countries reiterated their support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication, under UNESCO auspices, which was an important step towards the development of information and communication infrastructures in the developing countries. They were aware of the imbalances in human resources and

(Mr. Stromholm, Sweden)

technologies in the field of information and communication between the majority of third world countries and many developed States and were prepared to do what they could to remedy that situation by contributing to sound evolution in the field of information. The training of third world students could be organized on a wider scale in order to stimulate the development of national information services.

56. A new world information and communication order could be developed only in freedom, an evolving and continuous process. Any infringement of freedom of opinion and expression as defined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be counterproductive to efforts to achieve that objective and would also be in contradiction with the very foundations of society. Free access to information was a fundamental right and no Government must interfere with its exercise through censorship or other restrictions.

57. The Nordic countries had always hoped that a true consensus would be reached on all the recommendations of the Committee on Information. They deplored the fact that the work of that Committee had been seriously compromised by the introduction of issues which were basically extraneous to its mandate. Any definition of the new world information and communication order must be based on the consensus reached by UNESCO and the Committee must concentrate its efforts on the main issues entrusted to it, namely, ways of enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations information activities.

58. Mr. MARIN-BOSCH (Mexico), stressing the paramount importance of information and communication, said that the developing countries must acquire the necessary infrastructures rapidly in order to avoid being left behind by the tremendous progress made in that field and to put an end to the monopoly of a small group of countries so that international relations in that field could become truly democratic.

59. The establishment of a new information and communication order would put an end to inequality in that field and the United Nations had a fundamental role to play in that regard. Co-operation between the United Nations and UNESCO, within their respective spheres of competence, must therefore be strengthened further. In order for the Special Political Committee and the Committee on Information to be able to make decisive progress on questions relating to information, Member States must show the necessary political will. If the work of the Committee on Information had not borne fruit, that was because not all groups had taken as constructive an attitude as the Group of 77. The proposals submitted recently by the Chairman of the Working Group seemed very positive to his delegation.

60. The economy measures necessitated by the financial crisis should not impede the activities of the Department of Public Information. Those activities had always been a priority because the Department was responsible for projecting the best possible image of the Organization. To cut back on those activities would be to play into the hands of those who were seeking to reduce the political and moral influence of the Organization to its simplest expression. To develop the Department's activities would also be a way to enhance the effectiveness of the

(Mr. Marin-Bosch, Mexico)

Organization's work, by increasingly drawing the attention of world public opinion in both developed and developing countries to the vital importance of the United Nations. The crisis of confidence in multilateralism should be prompting the organization of an effective information campaign in favour of the United Nations. In such a context, it would hardly be wise to reduce information activities. The Department faced an immense task, as a recent very telling example showed: some days earlier, the General Assembly had adopted an historic resolution concerning the world legal order. The United States media, including the most reliable New York newspaper, had made no mention of it.

61. Lastly, his delegation wished to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and his colleagues, for the way in which they had performed the tasks entrusted to the Department.

AGENDA ITEM 75: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/SPC/41/L.8, A/SPC/41/L.10 to L.18)

62. Mr. WILSKI (Poland) and Mr. NAVARRO (Nicaragua) said that, had they been present for the vote at the Committee's 18th meeting on the draft resolutions on agenda item 75, they would have voted in favour of them.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.