

76. Mr. SERRANO (Cuba), referring to the arguments put forward by the representative of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, supported his proposal that the restriction in paragraph 2(c) of the draft under consideration should be deleted.

77. Mr. OSMAN (Egypt), Rapporteur, said that the text before the Committee was the best he had been able to produce after two days of consultation. He had now completed his role as mediator and could not amend the text of the draft paragraphs.

78. Mr. KEMAL (Pakistan) said he was glad that the sponsors of the previous drafts had been able to accept the compromise text contained in document A/C.5/L.1175. He wished, however, to express some reservations on questions of form. Firstly, the text of paragraph 3(a) seemed to him too emphatic; it would probably be better to say that the Secretary-General should "endeavour to maintain expenditure" rather than "ensure that expenditure... is maintained" within the approved figure. Paragraph 3(b) seemed too restrictive; it stated that the estimates should be prepared with a view to achieving reductions in the funds requested; it might perhaps be preferable to ask the Secretary-General to prepare estimates with a view to better economy. In the English text of paragraph 3(b), the expression "this field of activities" did not seem very apt as there were many different fields of activities involved.

79. He would, however, be willing to accept the draft paragraphs as they stood.

80. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) said that he would have preferred the retention of subparagraphs (a) (i) and (v) of document A/C.5/L.1173 in the draft paragraphs under consideration (A/C.5/L.1175). Several representatives had complained that there was no clear definition of the terms "expert" and "consultant" and that the procedures applied to date for the selection of experts and consultants left much to be desired.

81. He nevertheless supported the draft paragraphs as contained in the French text of document A/C.5/L.1175; the Arabic text should, he felt, be revised.

82. Mr. ELDEEB (Sudan) said that the role to be played by the regional bodies should be stressed. For example, they could draw up lists of available consultants in the various parts of the world in which they operated. The regional economic commissions could request the Governments concerned to provide them with information for that purpose.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

1642nd meeting

Friday, 11 October 1974, at 10.40 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Costa P. CARANICAS (Greece).

A/C.5/SR.1642

AGENDA ITEM 73

Programme budget for the biennium 1974-1975 (*continued*) (for the previous A/... and A/C.5/... documents, see the 1640th meeting; A/9608/Add.5 and 6, A/C.5/L.1172, A/C.5/L.1175)

Use of experts and consultants in the United Nations (concluded) (A/9112 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2, A/C.5/1611, A/C.5/L.1175)

1. The CHAIRMAN recalled that, as the sponsors of the draft paragraphs contained in documents A/C.5/L.1173/Rev.1 and A/C.5/L.1174 had withdrawn their proposals, the Committee now had before it only the draft paragraphs submitted by the Rapporteur (A/C.5/L.1175).

2. Mr. GRODSKY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) expressed his gratitude to the Rapporteur and to the sponsors of the two initial drafts for the efforts they had made to reach a compromise solution, namely, the text appearing in document A/C.5/L.1175. While his delegation

would have preferred a more forceful wording, it was prepared to approve the proposed version in its entirety. However, for reasons of principle, he could not agree to the retention of the words "when appropriate" in paragraph 2(c) because the statement of the principle of equitable geographical distribution was considerably weakened by those two words. With regard to the argument that that principle was difficult to apply in practice, he would like to make several points. In the first place, what the Committee was currently concerned with was the enunciation of a general principle and not its practical application. A clear distinction must be made between the two ideas. In the second place, the Secretary-General, in his report (A/C.5/1611, para. 7) had fully approved the recommendation by the Joint Inspection Unit concerning the principle of geographical distribution, and he had made no mention of difficulties in applying that principle. That showed that all the alleged difficulties were nothing more than a pretext resorted to by certain delegations to weaken the principle and to find loop-holes so that it might be possible to avoid applying it in future. Those delegations wanted to maintain the *status quo* whereby three countries

from the same region supplied 50 per cent of the experts and consultants, whereas certain regions continued to be under-represented. Despite the allegation made in some quarters that the principle applied only to permanent staff, the principle involved was a general principle that was valid for all the activities of the United Nations.

3. His delegation accordingly asked that the words "when appropriate" should be deleted from the draft paragraphs (A/C.5/L.1175).

4. Mr. MOUELLE (United Republic of Cameroon) was very pleased that the goodwill shown by the sponsors of the first two texts had made it possible to reach a compromise. However, paragraph 3(b) of the new text seemed to be somewhat vague in that it did not indicate the extent of the contemplated reductions in the estimates. His delegation would have preferred the wording of subparagraph (b) of the third paragraph in the draft submitted by Nigeria and Poland (A/C.5/L.1173/Rev.1), which had now been withdrawn by those delegations.

5. His delegation was pleased that the Secretary-General attached importance to the need for recruiting experts and consultants on a wider geographical basis. The developing countries were justified in demanding a greater role in the development process with which they were directly concerned, and the Secretary-General ought to have laid greater stress on that point in his report (A/C.5/L.1611).

6. Mr. AGYEMAN (Ghana) said that although he generally approved of the new proposed text, he shared the objections which had been made regarding the phrase "when appropriate", and he would like it to be deleted. He agreed with what the Pakistan delegation had said at the previous meeting with regard to paragraph 3(a), which actually was much too narrowly worded. He would prefer that subparagraph to be deleted, but he would not press that suggestion if it was apt to compromise the consensus.

7. Mr. JASABE (Sierra Leone) said he regretted that unforeseen circumstances had prevented his delegation from participating earlier in the debate because otherwise it would have been able to collaborate in drafting a text more in line with its views. He particularly regretted that it had been necessary to compromise on questions of principle such as the definition of experts and consultants. Paragraph 3(a) of document A/C.5/L.1175 seemed, moreover, to be contrary to the views expressed by numerous delegations, and in particular those of Pakistan and Brazil, which had been opposed to the fixing of a ceiling on the expenditure for experts and consultants. As, however, the text submitted to the Committee represented a compromise between differing points of view, his delegation had no other course but to approve it.

8. Mr. PINTO BAZURCO (Peru) pointed out that his delegation had urged that the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be clearly affirmed in the new text. As the words "when appropriate" in paragraph 2(c) considerably weakened that subparagraph, he formally proposed that they should be deleted.

At the request of the representative of the Soviet Union, a vote was taken by roll-call on the Peruvian proposal.

Iceland, having been drawn by lot by the Chairman, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Kuwait, Libyan Arab Republic, Mexico, Mongolia, Nigeria, Peru, Poland, Romania, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Republic of Tanzania, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Argentina, Bulgaria, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Colombia, Congo, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, German Democratic Republic, Ghana, Hungary.

Against: Iran, Netherlands, Niger, Philippines, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Upper Volta, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany (Federal Republic of).

Abstaining: India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Portugal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Cameroon, Uruguay, Venezuela, Algeria, Bolivia, Burma, Chad, Chile, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Guatemala.

The proposal was adopted by 28 votes to 15, with 32 abstentions.

9. The CHAIRMAN proposed that the text of the draft paragraphs submitted by the Rapporteur (A/C.5/L.1175), as just amended, should be adopted by the Committee by consensus.

It was so decided.

10. Mr. SETHI (India) said that despite the fact that his delegation had not objected to the Committee adopting the draft paragraphs by consensus, it did have some reservations to make. As far as his delegation was concerned, the best procedure would have been to reproduce the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in their entirety rather than to make a choice from among them which was apt to be arbitrary. Although the sponsors of the various proposals had made an effort to reproduce recommendations actually appearing in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, once those recommendations were taken out of the broader and more detailed context of the report, they could still be nothing more than fragmentary.

11. For example, paragraph 2(c) of the adopted text, which dealt with the question of the principle of geographical distribution, did not correspond exactly to what the Joint Inspection Unit had said in recommendation No. 5(c) and recommendation No. 6 appearing at the end of its report (see A/9112 and Corr.1). Paragraph 3 of the text that had been adopted was similarly open to criticism: its three subparagraphs seemed to be fragmentary and did not relate to the whole of the report that was before the Committee. Subparagraph (a) lacked flexibility and ran counter to the principle of programme budgeting. Subparagraph (b) represented an even more serious infraction in that regard, for it was not possible to demand large reductions in the funds requested without harming the implementation of certain programmes.

12. Two basic notions should have been embodied in the text. The first was the need to establish a very close relationship between the use of experts and consultants, on the one hand, and the programmes undertaken or approved, on the other, and to make clearly apparent the responsibility incumbent upon the organs which approved those programmes. The second was the need to ensure that expenditure was always made with a full knowledge of what was being done.

13. Finally, he found it hard to understand why the sponsors of one of the earlier drafts, contained in document A/C.5/L.1174, had chosen the wording which appeared in paragraph 3 (c) of the adopted text. There was, after all, no point in recommending that the use of consultants should be more directly related to economic and social development when it was known that UNCTAD, UNIDO and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs were the bodies that resorted most frequently to the services of specialists. However, in the light of the comments made by the inspectors in chapter VI of their report, and taking into account the fact that they provided, for example in paragraph 141 of their report, many instances of the use of experts for projects which were scarcely related to the priority needs of developing countries, the desire of the sponsors of the draft to stress that point was understandable. In that case, however, his delegation would have preferred to mention the developing countries explicitly in the text.

14. Mr. KHAONSARI (Iran) said that he would have liked to see a mention, in paragraph 3 (c) of the draft text for inclusion in the Committee's report, of the question of human rights, which was part of the over-all problem of economic and social development.

15. Mr. DIPP GOMEZ (Dominican Republic) explained that he had voted for the amendment originally proposed by the Soviet Union because there should be no deviation from the principle of recruitment on as wide a geographical basis as possible laid down in Article 101 of the Charter.

16. Mr. OKEYO (Kenya) expressed reservations concerning the text adopted by consensus. The wording of paragraph 3 (a) seemed a little too inflexible, and asking the Secretary-General to ensure that "no supplementary estimates are presented" was too strict. The reduction in estimates for the use of experts and consultants called for in paragraph 3 (b) seemed contrary to the principle of programme budgeting.

17. Mr. MAGAGI (Niger) said that he had not considered it worth while to object to the contentious phrase "when appropriate", since it had been nullified by the requirement, laid down in paragraph 2 (a), that experts and consultants should be recruited only from highly qualified candidates.

18. Mr. ABRASZEWSKI (Poland) said he was pleased that the text finally adopted embodied the two principles which the sponsors of the draft paragraphs in document A/C.5/L.1173/Rev.1 had considered essential, namely, recruitment on as wide a geographical basis as possible and the use of outside expertise primarily for specific assignments.

United Nations public information policies and activities (continued) (A/9608/Add.3, A/C.5/1605)

19. Mr. AKATANI (Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information) thanked the Netherlands Government for its announcement of a voluntary contribution of \$300,000 to the Centre for Economic and Social Information for 1975. He also thanked the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany for its generous contribution, which had made it possible for the Centre to initiate an information programme in the German language.

20. Replying to a question put by the representative of the Netherlands at the preceding meeting, he said that it was hard to tell how the improvement in the global public image of the United Nations was manifesting itself. The best one could do was to build a composite picture from various information sources, such as national polls, United Nations information centres and the press among others. The problem was complicated by other phenomena. Public opinion in different parts of the world tended to emphasize different aspects of the work of the United Nations. In the developed countries, there seemed to be increasing interest in the Organization's economic and social work. However, the level of interest was not the same everywhere; in some countries public opinion tended to look inward, while in others there were various groups and organizations which were doing more than ever before to promote increased interest in economic and social development. A recent public opinion poll in an industrialized European country had shown that that tendency was strongest among young people. The Office of Public Information was, of course, attempting to provide the greatest possible support to such groups.

21. Public support for the United Nations did not appear to have fluctuated as widely in the developing countries. Considerable space and time continued to be devoted to development in the mass media. In some developing countries, however, public opinion, while strongly approving the initiatives which had resulted from the sixth special session of the General Assembly, was becoming impatient with the slow pace of development.

22. The representative of the Netherlands had also asked whether the current budgetary means of the Office of Public Information would permit it to fulfil its new mandate. It was always difficult to say what was a sufficient public information budget. It had in fact been necessary to cancel or postpone some projects, such as the making or updating of films, the participation of the Centre for Economic and Social Information in a conference of municipal authorities from developing and developed countries, and the reprinting of the most popular specialized publications.

23. At the preceding meeting, the representative of the Soviet Union had criticized the Office of Public Information for two instances in which its press releases had been inaccurate or inadequate. After looking into those cases, he was inclined to place the blame on error and not on deliberate distortion. He asked the Committee to bear in mind that in the preceding year the small staff of the Office of Public Information at Headquarters, who always worked under time pressure, had issued about 3,320 press releases,

comprising a total of 16,000 pages. While human error was always possible, he assured the representative of the Soviet Union that the Office would continue to make every effort to ensure that its output was beyond criticism.

24. Mr. MAJOLI (Italy) noted that Italy was a member of the Consultative Panel on Public Information and that there was a United Nations Information Centre in the very heart of its capital. That showed the interest which the Italian Government took in the work of the Office of Public Information. One could not but welcome the progress made in two years and congratulate the Office on its outstanding achievements, the more so as it was particularly difficult to promote such ideas as universal peace and the interdependence of nations in the modern world. Praise was particularly due to the staff responsible for press releases. Italy had also suffered recently from some errors in press releases, but the members of the Committee should really be grateful for those documents, which, because of the speed with which they were issued, made it possible to follow very closely the work of the various bodies. On a general note, it should not be forgotten that the success of United Nations public information activities depended not only on the publication machinery but, most of all, on the substance of the information to be published.

25. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations public information policies and activities, he welcomed the statement in paragraph 10 that only individuals of the highest professional calibre were appointed as directors of information centres. The persons selected should also be thoroughly familiar with the customs of the country in which they worked, and particularly with the structure of its information media. In that connexion, he supported the suggestion made by the Japanese delegation that States should give more assistance to United Nations information centres in their territories.

26. He shared the appreciation expressed by the Secretary-General, in paragraph 6 of his report, for the voluntary contributions made to the Trust Fund for Economic and Social Information. It should be possible to avoid any further drain on the budget through the redistribution of resources and personnel. The fact that the Committee was studying the measures envisaged for broadening and intensifying the activities of the Office of Public Information did not mean that it accepted the financial implications of those projects. For the moment, one could only welcome the fact that no supplementary appropriations would be requested.

27. Mr. NAUDY (France) said he considered that the dissemination of information about the United Nations was one of the most important of the Organization's tasks and should be accorded high priority. The volume of work which the Office of Public Information had to perform should lead it to use the necessarily limited funds at its disposal in the most judicious and efficacious way. His delegation had read the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations public information policies and activities and the related report of the Advisory Committee with great interest. He recalled that France was a member of the Consultative Panel on Public Information and his delegation generally agreed with the contents of those reports; it attached particular importance to the Advisory Com-

mittee's comment, in paragraph 2 of its report, that the discussion of public information activities and methodologies should not be divorced from consideration of the related financial implications.

28. While he recognized the useful work being done by the Centre for Economic and Social Information, he asked whether there was any permanent machinery for collaboration between the Centre and the various information services of organizations active in the economic and social fields. Documents such as "Facts" issued by the Centre seemed to be the result of joint work by various services. There was a risk of duplication unless tasks were clearly defined.

29. In general, there was too often a tendency in the United Nations to make judgements based solely on documentation and to speak in an abstract way. When submitting its report in 1975, the Office of Public Information should cite more specific examples of its activities and give a practical idea of the programmes undertaken by the Office, particularly in the field of the mass information media, such as television and radio.

30. Mr. AGYEMAN (Ghana) welcomed the improvement in the global public image of the Organization to which the Secretary-General referred in paragraph 1 of his report. Many Western countries were sorry to see the third world gaining influence in the United Nations and were disappointed by the positions the Organization was taking on colonialism and neo-colonialism, such positions being contrary to their interests. The Office of Public Information had an immense task to perform, for in some countries reactionary elements continued to ridicule the Organization, while in others its achievements were known only to certain political circles. The measures envisaged would no doubt make it possible to remedy the inadequacies in the dissemination of information. In that respect, the Office of Public Information could make an effort, not only in Africa, but throughout the world, and particularly among young people, to give greater publicity to the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination.

31. He was happy to note in paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's report that no effort would be spared to ensure that only individuals of the highest professional calibre would be appointed as directors of information centres. It would be most unfortunate if in the past greater laxity had given rise to wasteful practices. As for the periodic meetings mentioned in paragraph 11, precise information was not available on the one held in Addis Ababa in August 1974. Some misgivings might be felt as to the value of those meetings and the financial implications. Perhaps the Secretary-General might, from New York, supervise the activities of the directors of the various information centres, relying where necessary on observations made in the field.

32. Mr. BOUAYAD-AGHA (Algeria) agreed with the statement in the Secretary-General's report that public opinion was becoming aware of the efforts made by the United Nations, particularly in the economic and social fields. However, those efforts should be intensified so that public opinion could realize not only the potentials but the limitations of the United Nations, and it was in that area

that information activities could and should play a particularly important part. The ability of the United Nations to achieve its aims depended on the manner in which its work was understood, particularly in the Western world. The public often had a distorted image of the United Nations, and it was therefore necessary that the activities of the Office of Public Information should be well planned so that the real nature of the combined efforts made by the Member States could be understood.

33. The Secretary-General considered that the Office of Public Information was able to cope with its current tasks. The Office even offered its assistance to the Fifth Committee. But what the delegations were asking was a further effort, namely to explain to the outside world what the United Nations activities were and what important decisions it took at the various sessions. That, unfortunately, was where the Office of Public Information showed lack of imagination. Its role should be to combat certain attempts by sensational journalism to make the world believe that the United Nations was engaged in sterile discussions. The Office of Public Information should publicize United Nations successes, for example the work of the sixth special session of the General Assembly. The task of the Office was therefore to disseminate balanced and sound information.

34. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco) thought that the public information sector should be an effective means of achieving more and more direct contacts between the United Nations and the peoples of the whole world and of explaining on as wide a scale as possible the efforts it made to improve their lot. In that respect, the part played by the Office of Public Information during the events in the Middle East and in Cyprus was most useful. As a result of its sound and effective action, public opinion was convinced that the United Nations services had spared no effort to combat the disastrous effects of those crises. However, his delegation by no means regarded the role of the Office of Public Information as that of a press agency. It considered it as having a far superior role, assuming that "information" was understood as meaning essentially an exchange, or even a dialogue. To quote one tragic example, there had been a deplorable delay in informing world opinion of the disastrous drought prevailing in certain countries of the Sudano-Sahelian area and even in a geographical belt stretching across the Sudan, Ethiopia and Yemen. World public opinion had been unaware of the drought and had consequently not been mobilized. That example showed the economic and social role that information could play. It was in the interest of all countries, in the current world situation, to promote the dissemination of information in those fields and co-ordination between the information centres and the countries in which they were established.

35. He wished also to recall the useful role played by the United Nations in providing technical information to developing countries. He noted with satisfaction the importance UNESCO attached to facilitating exchanges of scientific information and the similar efforts made by FAO to disseminate technical information. UNIDO, too, was proving most helpful in promoting exchanges of technical information, in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2152 (XXI) setting up that organization.

36. His delegation approved the other aspects of the Secretary-General's report and wished to pay a tribute to the efforts made or planned in all fields, while noting that no additional expenditure would thereby be incurred.

37. Mr. KIVANC (Turkey) expressed his delegation's satisfaction with the Secretary-General's report on information policies and activities and the report of the Advisory Committee on that subject.

38. His delegation also was gratified to note the development of a favourable attitude towards the United Nations which seemed to be taking shape among world opinion since 1973. That development was undoubtedly the result of the constructive policies and operations of the United Nations on the one hand and of the role and methods adopted by the Office of Public Information on the other.

39. His delegation approved of the new multimedia thematic approach of the Office of Public Information and also of the new orientation it was giving to its activities, as indicated in paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's report. It also approved of the main information themes emphasized by the Office of Public Information in 1974, as set forth in paragraph 3. It was important in that respect to provide and maintain a proper balance between the various media, such as newspapers, magazines and other publications, television, radio and films, while specially taking into account the communication networks of developing countries. While his delegation certainly favoured modern techniques and rapid systems of communication, it was convinced that one of the aims of the United Nations should also be to reach as large a number of the people of every part of the world as possible, by making use of all communications techniques and systems, whether modern or traditional, to maintain public awareness and to mobilize and stimulate public opinion. If a proper ratio was not maintained among the various communication techniques, the United Nations could find itself engaged in costly, and in some respects luxurious, procedures going beyond the targets it had set itself.

40. The Turkish delegation wished to express its appreciation of the action of the Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark in making voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for Economic and Social Information. It also wished to thank the Netherlands delegation for its generous offer for 1975.

41. He wished to draw attention to paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's report and was happy to note that all the necessary stress was being laid on such concepts as the effectiveness, evaluation and follow-up aspects of budgetary spending. He would therefore suggest that top priority in the next programme budget should be given to projects for strengthening inadequately staffed information centres.

42. It was gratifying to note that the Secretary-General was sparing no effort to ensure that only individuals of the highest professional calibre should be appointed as directors of information centres. Such a positive approach should be maintained in what was a very sensitive area.

43. His delegation supported all the efforts made to increase co-operation and co-ordination between the Office

of Public Information and the other departments of the Secretariat and the United Nations regional economic commissions, so that duplication and overlapping might be prevented. It also supported the efforts to intensify further the degree of communication between the Office of Public Information and the established information agencies and outlets as well as non-governmental organizations. It also expressed its satisfaction with the constructive contributions made by the Office of Public Information to emergency relief operations, particularly in the Sudano-Sahelian region and after the disaster which had just struck Honduras.

44. His delegation also wished to express its appreciation of the efforts made by the Secretary-General to implement the heavy and flexible programmes of the Office of Public Information by readjusting the order of its priorities and reallocating available resources, without asking for supplementary appropriations for 1974. With regard to the budget for the next biennium, his delegation shared the concern of the Advisory Committee expressed in paragraph 2 of its report. From the purely budgetary point of view, some of the Secretary-General's suggestions in his report dealing with various information activities and methods would have financial implications. If those suggestions were approved for 1974, they should be expressed in monetary terms in the budget for the biennium 1976-1977, in addition to the normal budget figures for the Office of Public Information. Approval of the suggestions could also be interpreted as an advance commitment of the Fifth Committee and might result in an increase in the budget estimates of the Office of Public Information over the expected trend provided for in the programme. It would therefore be advisable to wait until the global figure and the components of the next biennial programme budget estimates, and also the policies and priorities of the Secretary-General, were known, and for the Fifth Committee to reserve its right to examine the budget estimates of the Office of Public Information, so that the Committee could then discuss the proposals and accept them in the appropriate manner. That attitude did not mean that the Turkish delegation was opposed to all the suggestions. It considered that the Office of Public Information was functioning perfectly well under the direction of Mr. Akatani, but it simply wished to point out that the Fifth Committee should abstain from setting such precedents.

45. His delegation therefore proposed that, if the Fifth Committee stated in its report to the General Assembly that it "endorses" or "takes note of" the report of the Secretary-General on public information policies and activities, it should take care to emphasize that that approach did not mean any financial commitment for the programme budget for the biennium 1976-1977.

46. Mr. NAGGAGA (Uganda) said that he had nothing new to add to what the previous speakers had said, except for a brief remark concerning paragraph 2 of the report of the Secretary-General. That paragraph stated that the Office of Public Information had broadened and intensified its professional activities with a view to encouraging and assisting more effectively the established governmental and non-governmental information agencies and organs in their coverage of the work of the United Nations. One of the activities mentioned was the establishment of personal contacts with media representatives at the editorial level.

On that point, he would like to remind the Committee that some months previously, at the time of the preparations for the sixth special session of the General Assembly, a leading newspaper in the United States had published a series of articles on the United Nations. Those articles, to say the least, had hardly reflected the role of the United Nations and its Secretariat. It was ironical that, at the time when the Organization was tackling the subject of the establishment of a new world economic order, some elements of the press were concerned only with sensationalism. It was of course encouraging to note, from the report of the Secretary-General, that the public image of the United Nations had improved, but it should not be forgotten that some people were bent on painting a different image. The Assistant Secretary-General and his staff should therefore try to enlighten the journalists accredited to the Organization.

47. Mr. MSELLE (United Republic of Tanzania) noted that several delegations had mentioned the report of the Secretary-General, and in particular paragraph 1, which began on an optimistic note, namely, that an encouraging development appeared to have taken place with regard to the public image of the Organization. That was perhaps true, but the press did not always express the same conviction.

48. He wished to put a number of questions to the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information. In reading the report of the Secretary-General, he had wondered what would be the best way for the Committee to proceed at the current session, when it had no programme budget to consider. He wondered whether the Secretary-General intended to continue to submit a report on public information policies and activities each year, even though the Fifth Committee was now considering the programme budget only every two years.

49. He had been quite surprised to learn, in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report, that when the Consultative Panel on Public Information had been invited by the Economic and Social Council to undertake a study, it had established a working group that would meet early in 1975. It would seem that the trend towards a proliferation of bodies had reappeared, and he hoped that that decision would not lead to an increase in the number of meetings and discussions and, consequently, an increase in expenditure.

50. Paragraph 3 of the report stated that the Office of Public Information during 1974 had emphasized a number of principal information themes. He would like to know what resources had been allocated to each of those themes, which could in practice be regarded as truly distinct programmes. Among the themes mentioned were population, transfer of science and technology, environment and human rights, including the eradication of racial discrimination and *apartheid*. He did not really see why the question of population occupied so important a position and hoped that it would not take up too big a share of the resources allotted to the Office of Public Information.

51. Furthermore, in various paragraphs the Secretary-General mentioned the holding of a number of meetings. Paragraph 11 referred to periodic meetings of directors of information centres, particularly a meeting that had taken

place in August 1974 at Addis Ababa. Paragraph 15 mentioned regional editors' roundtables, the latest of which had been held in Bangkok in May 1974 and had proved "eminently successful". Paragraph 17 stated that, in addition to the regional editors' roundtables, there had been "encounters" and that they too had been "particularly valuable". It would be interesting to know, for example, how many "encounters" there had been, who had participated in them, where they had been held, what they had been devoted to, what had been the results.

52. Paragraph 16 spoke of an initiative which might consist in instituting regular meetings of senior officials of the Office of Public Information with the heads of the New York liaison offices of other members of the United Nations system, as well as their information officers. That was a welcome initiative which ought to have been taken long before.

53. He could not, however, help wondering whether it was really useful to organize so many meetings, particularly during the same year. Of course, all the meetings concerned had already been mentioned in an earlier report of the Secretary-General on the review and appraisal of public information policies, submitted some years previously. Nevertheless, it might be useful to combine many of those meetings. The same applied to the meeting mentioned in the last sentence of paragraph 18.

54. He would like some clarification regarding paragraph 8, on the question of increasing the operational capacity of the network of United Nations information centres. He did not quite understand what was meant by "operational". Paragraph 13 was also unclear. It stated that the Secretary-General intended to address himself to the need to improve the position of centre directors and information assistants. Did that mean that the Committee should anticipate requests for reclassification of posts? The Committee should not endorse certain proposals without knowing the financial implications.

55. With respect to the Centre for Economic and Social Information, his delegation was grateful to the Governments of the countries mentioned in paragraph 6 of the report for their financial contributions to the Centre. At the twenty-sixth session, the Fifth Committee had considered the question of the Centre in detail, and the General Assembly had adopted a resolution defining the position of the Centre in relation to the Office of Public Information. The Centre should not be detached from the Office of Public Information to become a separate unit. In 1973 the Committee had considered the question of trust funds, which had been the subject of a report by the Joint Inspection Unit. He hoped that administering those funds

would not impede the proper functioning of the Secretariat, particularly the Office of Public Information. Finally, he was generally satisfied with the manner in which the Office of Public Information had carried out the various tasks entrusted to it.

56. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) said that public information activities were one of the most important tasks of the United Nations. The Office of Public Information should be commended for the manner in which it had carried out its mandate because, even though there had been some cases of negligence on the part of individual staff members, the work of the Office was generally outstanding.

57. However, what the Organization needed now was an entirely new approach to public information activities. Public opinion was rather ignorant about the United Nations, not through the fault of the Office of Public Information but because the press provided misinformation instead of information. Of course, the fault should be attributed not to news correspondents, who were generally good, but to editors who transformed the information submitted to them. An ideal remedy for the current situation would be for the Organization to have a satellite for the dissemination of information concerning the United Nations. Unfortunately, that was not possible. Another possibility would be for the Organization to have a radio station which would broadcast the debates of the various bodies direct in all the languages of the world. But there too a satellite would be needed, and that was not possible before the 1980s.

58. The press releases currently issued by the Office of Public Information did play an important role, but they were generally too long and news correspondents did not have, or did not take, the time to read them fully. The number of copies of press releases could be reduced and photocopying machines made available, so that those interested could pay to reproduce only the information which interested them. That would at the same time be a source of income for the Organization.

59. The Organization was, year after year, becoming more and more bogged down in bureaucracy. If what went on at the United Nations was generally known, Governments would certainly choose their representatives more carefully and they in turn would do more positive work and make the Organization more dynamic.

60. It was of the utmost importance that the Office of Public Information should inform the world of what was being done in the United Nations, so that public opinion could exert pressure on Governments to change their policies; that was possible only if the Organization's approach to public information activities was changed.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.