

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. SCHAFFER
(Vice-Chairman)

(Germany)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 75: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (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 DC-2/50, United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

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

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/46/SR.9
29 October 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 75: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) A/46/21, 449 and 582, A/SPC/46/L.5-8)

1. Mr. BOUTSKO (Ukraine) said that the draft resolutions (A/SPC/46/L.5 and 6) could be viewed as a turning point in the work of the Committee on Information and he hoped that they would be approved by consensus, thereby overcoming the confrontation and ideologically motivated positions prevalent in the past.
2. He commended the work of the Department of Public Information (DPI), with particular reference to its cooperation with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and its active role in publicizing United Nations activities in the fields of disarmament, human rights and the status and role of women. A number of the Department's publications were commendable, but chapter XV of the report of the Secretary-General (A/46/449), entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations information centres and services" should have contained at least preliminary information regarding the issues raised by a number of delegations, including Poland, Bulgaria and Yemen. He also called on the Department to give guidance concerning the establishment of information centres to those Member States which required it.
3. He asked for additional information on the composition of the round table for the European press due to be held in November 1991 and on the possible use of DPI expertise in the coverage of elections based on its experience in Namibia, Nicaragua and Haiti, bearing in mind that, on 1 December 1991, the Ukrainian people was to vote on Ukrainian independence and freely elect a national president for the first time in its history.
4. Despite the large number of journalists accredited to the United Nations, information about the full range of its activities was still failing to reach the public and efforts to make the system work must be stepped up by investigating problems relating to the working environment of United Nations correspondents, the preparation and distribution of materials to them, and other services offered by the Department of Public Information.
5. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Nepal) said that his country attached great importance to the freedom of expression and had constitutionally guaranteed the right to information. The activities of the world media and the wider dissemination of information had played a crucial role in the success of the movement for the restoration of democracy in his country in 1990. His Government had now adopted a new press law guaranteeing freedom of opinion and expression, which would greatly contribute to consolidating democracy.
6. The existing disparity in the flow of information between developing and developed countries was due to the former's lack of access to modern technology, and the United Nations could play an effective role in bridging

(Mr. Chowdhury, Nepal)

that gap by promoting the development of infrastructure, human resources and technology transfer in the field of information. His delegation supported the call for a new world information and communication order, giving special attention to the difficulties of the developing countries, particularly the least developed ones.

7. The unhindered flow of information was a first step in preventing conflicts and disputes and, in that connection, he commended the work of DPI and of the United Nations information centres operating in coordination with UNDP and UNESCO. The information centres represented an important link with the developing countries and feedback from them would be useful in evaluating public reaction and the effectiveness of the United Nations work. He felt that broad guidelines and standards should be laid down for the Department and the information centres, and that provision should be made for built-in flexibility and easier access to funding.

8. Provision of information in local languages was very important, and he called for more United Nations-related materials to be published in Nepali and for that language to be included in the Asia unit of the United Nations radio service.

9. He welcomed the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General and called for greater dissemination of information on the least developed countries through United Nations agencies. He commended the report of the Committee on Information and the two draft resolutions it contained, referring in particular to the provision concerning coordination with UNDP and UNESCO and to paragraph 3 of draft resolution B, requesting the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of a system-wide information programme for the Conference on Environment and Development to be held in 1992.

10. Mr. SALAS (Mexico) said that the Organization's growing role as a major force in international affairs had led to increasing public scrutiny of its work and that advances in information technology, had made it possible to publicize its activities throughout the world. The growing demand for information had placed greater responsibility on the Committee on Information and, in that connection, the establishment of machinery to maintain intersessional contacts between DPI and that Committee was of great importance.

11. Careful consideration should also be given to the information centres as a vital point of contact with the media in Member States and a key element in promoting knowledge and understanding of the United Nations work. The Committee on Information should continue to study the geographical location, funding, internal organization and efficiency of the centres, which needed to be given clear and appropriate guidelines. In that connection, he welcomed the commitment given in draft resolution B not to reduce the level of efficiency of the centres.

(Mr. Salas, Mexico)

12. The priorities for the work of DPI contained in paragraph 1 (b) (iii) of draft resolution B should be updated and amended in the light of developments in the work of the Organization and international events. Finally, the consensus reached in 1990 should act as an impetus for future action rather than a strait-jacket leading to immobility. The time was ripe to consolidate the free dissemination of information, with due respect for the cultural diversity that was a vital element in a world in the throes of political change.

13. Mr. NEJEDLY (Czechoslovakia) said that the Gulf War and the events of recent days had demonstrated that information and international communication were a reliable way of protecting human rights and democracy. In view of its historical experience, Czechoslovakia was well-placed to appreciate just how fundamental free and truthful information was to the existence of democracy and a State ruled by law. Recent and forthcoming changes in Czechoslovak legislation afforded legal guarantees of freedom of speech and expression. Democratic Czechoslovakia had opened its boundaries to the free flow of views, ideas and information. Within the framework of the subregional initiative, Hexagonale, Czechoslovakia was an active member of the special working group on information which was developing a joint strategy in the field of information and communication.

14. As ideology lost its impact on the exchange of information, there was a new opportunity for international organizations and institutions to assert the supranational, democratic and independent nature of information. The United Nations and the Committee on Information should become even more active in guaranteeing the free exchange of independent and pluralistic information and strengthening the national communications capacities of the developing countries. It should also ensure the best possible professional standards for journalists all over the world. In that connection, Czechoslovakia wished to express its readiness to participate in drafting an international code of ethics for journalists.

15. Mr. MIHOV (Bulgaria) said that the recent profound changes in various parts of the world had highlighted the importance of freedom of information and freedom of expression of opinion. Bulgaria's conviction that the right of the individual to obtain and disseminate information was an essential part of democratic society had been reflected in its new Constitution and also, more practically, in the Bulgarian mass media's contribution to the process of democratic change. The new international climate meant that the dissemination and free exchange of information was an increasingly important factor for maintaining international peace and security.

16. His delegation shared the view that eliminating existing disproportions in the flow of information was in the interests of all members of the international community. In that connection, UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication deserved special attention and support. The provisions of the draft resolution submitted by the Committee on

(Mr. Mihov, Bulgaria)

Information (A/SPC/46/L.5), particularly those relating to the facilitation of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology, were timely, useful and relevant.

17. DPI was confronted with radically new tasks as the role and reputation of the United Nations were the object of growing confidence. His delegation congratulated the Department on its work in addressing the new challenges within the restricting framework of a tight budget. An important aspect of DPI's activity was its encouragement, in conjunction with UNESCO, of the establishment of an independent and pluralistic press. His delegation therefore appreciated the positive experience of the Windhoek Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, and welcomed such publications by the Department as the World Media Handbook. In view of the requirement that the Department should react swiftly to international events it supported the idea contained in draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.6 that the Committee of Information should hold regular consultations with DPI.

18. In conclusion, since Bulgaria considered that strengthening its cooperation with international information agencies and institutions would be a further stimulus to successful democratization, it attached particular importance to the opening of a United Nations information centre in the Bulgarian capital. Such a step would be fully consonant with Bulgaria's commitment to the principles and ideals of the United Nations and its support for the increasingly active role of the Organization.

19. Mrs. MAIKARFI (Niger) said that her delegation was pleased to note that despite limited resources the Department of Public Information had succeeded in raising awareness of the activities of the United Nations. It welcomed the training programmes organized by the Department and the cooperation between DPI and regional organizations, third world press agencies, and other United Nations bodies. It also welcomed the revitalization of United Nations information centres, but considered that the procedure for establishing such centres should be regulated in the interests of equity among regions. Her delegation wished to express its satisfaction with the successful discussions which had taken place in the Committee on Information and fully supported draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.5 which stressed the need to direct resources towards improving all aspects of communications in developing countries. It also supported draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.6.

20. Despite recent progress, the establishment of a new world information and communication order was still a long way off. It was imperative to reduce the considerable disparity between developing and developed countries in the field of communication. Niger had made information a high priority since it enabled the illiterate majority of the population to become more aware of problems of development and had proved particularly important in combating desertification. However, the lack of modern communication technologies hampered the authorities of her country in their campaigns to reduce illiteracy and to halt the advance of the desert. The West should show itself

(Mrs. Maikarfi, Niger)

to be more understanding of the situation of developing countries by providing appropriate assistance that was indispensable to economic growth.

21. Mr. SHOGOFAN (Afghanistan) said that recent dramatic political changes had revealed the great importance of the flow of information and news and their role in shaping events. The United Nations and Member States faced serious economic, social and environmental problems, and in tackling them, issues related to information and communication should be given greater attention.

22. The time had come to address the establishment of a new and just international information and communication order. In that context, his delegation wished to congratulate DPI on its work on such serious issues as the maintenance of international peace and security, economic problems and problems related to the environment, health, narcotic drugs and human rights.

23. His delegation supported the two draft resolutions and the draft decision recommended by the Committee on Information and contained in its report (A/46/21). In view of the changes in the world and in the United Nations, the Committee on Information and DPI should adapt themselves to the new realities: that meant working seriously towards the establishment of a new international information and communication order. Member States and international organizations should extend technical and financial assistance to the Department in order to enable it to fulfil such an important task. Particularly in the least developed countries, communications required technical and financial cooperation.

24. Since 1987, new and independent mass media had emerged in Afghanistan which had actively supported the efforts of the United Nations in bringing peace to Afghanistan and in its reconstruction. The United Nations information centre in Kabul also had an important role to play and it should expand its technical assistance to the mass media of Afghanistan.

25. Mrs. LEGPAILA (Botswana) said that DPI had tried in recent years to work effectively, but it needed more funding in order to implement new programmes and projects. Her delegation was pleased to note, however, that despite the financial constraints on the Department some vital campaigns such as the Anti-Apartheid programmes still existed. The Programmes should not only continue but should be strengthened in terms of both financial and human resources until it was clear that the changes that were now taking place in South Africa were irreversible. Apartheid could not be declared dead until it was dead.

26. Information was an important element in a rapidly changing world and played a key role in the maintenance of peace. Her delegation hoped that the United Nations, through DPI, would help reach that objective by publicizing detailed and unbiased facts on world issues. It should also play a leading role in closing the gap between the developed and developing countries in

(Mrs. Legwaila, Botswana)

their capacities to disseminate information. To that end, it was vital that DPI and UNESCO should cooperate as closely as possible. Her delegation encouraged the Department to continue establishing United Nations information centres wherever the need arose, and to strengthen existing ones.

27. Mr. HOLGER (Chile) said that, with the growing influence of the Organization, public information was of particular importance, the work of DPI was a two-way process involving not only the dissemination of information but also the gathering of reactions and views on United Nations activities from world public opinion and the Member States' governments.

28. He shared the concern at the Department's lack of resources but felt that the reports of the Secretary-General, the Committee on Information and the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information offered a full and clear picture of the current information situation within the Organization. Useful and effective coverage had been provided of regional conflicts and peace-keeping, disarmament, human rights, economic, social and environmental issues, drug abuse control and apartheid, and all of those issues were fully covered in the two draft resolutions, which he hoped would be adopted by consensus.

29. He welcomed the plan to bring up to date the publication of the Yearbook of the United Nations and The Windhoek Seminar and Declaration were of great significance, and he hoped that similar events would be held in other regions. He also highlighted the important role of the United Nations information centres in transmitting information to and from the Member States, stressing the value of the periodic meetings organized by DPI for Directors, information officers and librarians.

30. Mr. KARANOV (Indonesia) said that communication and information were inseparably linked to the advancement of political stability, economic well-being, social justice and cultural identity. Although a revolution was taking place in communication technology, but the developing countries were denied the opportunity to benefit fully from it. Indonesia and other non-aligned countries considered that progress towards a new world information and communication order was a prerequisite for developing nations if they were to promote their development goals in accordance with their own needs and interests. As a further step towards removing the inequalities inherent in the communication and information system, it might be possible to initiate a programme of giving awards to recognized individuals, institutions and countries which had made effective use of information and communication to promote social progress and improve living standards in greater freedom.

31. Developing nations had assiduously sought to strengthen cooperation with the United Nations and more particular between it and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries. His delegation especially appreciated the daily news dispatches issued by DPI in conjunction with the Pool.

(Mr. Karanoy, Indonesia)

32. Within the framework of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries, Indonesia had conducted media training programmes with the participation of many countries from Asia, the Pacific, Africa and Latin America. It had welcomed Namibia into the programme in 1991.

33. His delegation wished to draw particular attention to the UNESCO-sponsored International Programme for the Development of Communication and to support the appeal to all member States and organizations for contributions to facilitate the speedy and continuous implementation of the Programme. The Windhoek Seminar, organized jointly by UNESCO and the United Nations, should provide a model for further seminars to be convened in other regions of the world. The endeavours of DPI in expanding contact with non-governmental organizations and educational groups, strengthening information centres and implementing training programmes for media professionals from developing countries, as well as its dissemination of information on the Middle East and apartheid, deserved special commendation. The United Nations Information Centre in Jakarta had organized extremely useful training sessions, produced television programmes in the Indonesian language and assisted in the printing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Indonesian.

34. Mr. POPESCU (Romania) said that the fundamental human right of freedom of expression and opinion was one of the basic elements of the new constitution shortly to be adopted in his country. The development of independent public and private media was particularly important for countries facing a difficult transition to new social and economic structures. Romania appreciated the assistance offered by various national and international institutions in improving media technology and infrastructures, and he looked forward to further multilateral cooperation, especially for development projects in the field of information.

35. With the increasing involvement of the United Nations in international affairs, it was very important for the Organization itself to provide information on its activities. The DPI was particularly important in that respect and he felt that its activities should be focused on the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General, the Security Council and the General Assembly to maintain peace and stability in the world, the promotion of human rights, environmental protection, the status of women and the special care of children, drug abuse and trafficking, terrorism, humanitarian aid, and social and economic development. Despite the limited financial and human resources available, funds should be allocated to cover unexpected but important international events requiring United Nations involvement.

36. He welcomed the initiative of the thirteenth session of the Committee on Information in holding a debate on the functioning and coordination of the United Nations information centres, some of the conclusions of which had been included in draft resolution B. His Government fully supported the activities of the Bucharest Centre and was considering further increases in its financial

(Mr. Popescu, Romania)

contribution, despite serious economic obstacles, in order to meet the great demand for information from national institutions, the mass media and others.

37. Mr. ALSAIDI (Yemen) said that given the importance of information as a means of promoting international peace and security, efforts to bridge the gap between the information capacities of the industrialized developing countries should continue. His delegation commended the role played by DPI; it welcomed the encounters for journalists on the Palestinian question which DPI had co-sponsored and requested that the Palestinian intifadah should be given full coverage. It also welcomed the Windhoek Declaration, and called for the holding of a similar seminar on promoting an independent and pluralistic Arab press.

38. With a view to broadening the current process to include the Arab world, his delegation had requested the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Sana'a. As a democratic country Yemen had a free and pluralistic press, and yet lacked the resources which would facilitate the development of democratic institutions. An information centre would enhance the two-way flow of information between the Yemeni press and the Organization, and would also be able to assist in training a press corps which was more readily able to assimilate the changes taking place world wide. Pursuant to document A/SPC/46/L.6, the request had been approved for recommendation to the General Assembly, and his delegation therefore wished to express its thanks to those concerned.

39. Mr. TRINH XUAN LANG (Viet Nam) said that the role of information and communication had become more vital than ever at a time of profound change and unprecedented advances in science and technology. Freedom of information was a fundamental human right, but information was really a two-edged sword. Accurate, objective information reflecting national and cultural diversity as well as universal human values helped promote peace, international cooperation and development; but misleading information could have unimaginable consequences. Genuine freedom of information must be accompanied by a sense of responsibility. The abuse of that freedom to impose ideas on others or to attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries must be resolutely condemned.

40. Unfortunately, the progress in communications technology had not narrowed the gap between developed and developing countries. A few news agencies and mass media from a few developed countries dominated the existing information system, giving only the one-sided views and values of the developed countries while underrepresenting or misrepresenting those of the developing countries. That neither served genuine freedom of information nor promoted an exchange among equals.

41. Thus, the establishment of a more balanced and effective new international information and communication order, as advocated by UNESCO and the movement of non-aligned countries since the late 1970s, was still

(Mr. Trinh Xuan Lang, Viet Nam)

imperative. That new order must respect the cultural and social values and the sovereignty of all States and facilitate a free flow of information in the interests of international peace and security, understanding and cooperation.

42. In the light of the rapid technological advances, the developing countries should band together to give priority to modernizing their media infrastructures, and the technologically advanced countries should assist them. The United Nations system itself should progress from mere declarations to practical action. Such combined efforts would certainly increase the participation of the developing countries in the international information system, gradually reduce disparities and finally bridge the gap between the developed and developing countries.

43. Since it was not currently feasible for every country to have a United Nations information centre, DPI should make it a priority to provide those without an information centre with more information materials, so that all countries could benefit from the common resources.

44. The welcome consensus reached by the Committee on Information at its latest session augured well, and showed a recognition that the shortcomings of the existing international information system must be remedied through international cooperation that would work to the benefit of the developing countries. The United Nations and its specialized agencies had enormous potential for promoting such cooperation, and DPI, while addressing the many other topics of concern to it, should concentrate on that task. UNESCO, through its International Programme for the Development of Communication, had given valuable assistance in that regard.

45. Viet Nam itself was committed to freedom of the press and of information, as guaranteed by its Constitution and legislation, and would welcome all bilateral and international assistance to develop its mass media systems.

46. Mr. KUWONU (Togo) said that the movement away from confrontation between political blocs and towards democracy had induced positive change in most of Africa. The peoples of the continent were fighting for their basic rights, among them freedom of expression, opinion and information, which presupposed the existence of an independent press free from all pressure and exclusively at the service of the people. At a national conference held in July and August 1991, the Togolese people had emphasized the crucial role of the media in shaping communal thinking and the need to create conditions conducive to the establishment of a new information order that would be more democratic, just and objective, and to that end had adopted resolutions on the freedom and independence of the press. Togo's Government of National Renewal was determined to establish an independent, pluralistic press as a factor in the movement towards democracy currently under way in the country, and to make the establishment of a new world information and communication order one of the priorities of its foreign policy.

(Mr. Kuwona, Togo)

47. The report of the Committee on Information (A/46/21) showed that there was consensus on the need to favour a better dissemination of information, eliminate imbalances, revitalize information activities and increase the Committee's effectiveness. Togo fully supported the draft resolution on information in service of humanity, contained in document A/SPC/46/L.5, in particular subparagraph (a). Particular efforts should be made to ensure diverse sources of information and free access to information. That would require doing away with the monopoly of the developed countries on the technical advances in the area of communication and allowing the developing countries to catch up with the latest developments.

48. The Windhoek Declaration had emphasized a number of priority concerns with respect to the preservation of press freedom and diversity, and Togo had already endorsed those concerns and enacted provisions to ensure the freedom, independence and pluralism of the media, among them the abolition of censorship.

49. As the focal point for information within the United Nations system, DPI was working with admirable dynamism to deal with a number of the major global concerns. The Department was also to be commended for its enhanced cooperation with UNESCO and with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, and it should expand its training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries in order to produce more skilled professionals.

50. Peace and security under the new global political order that now seemed to be taking shape could be guaranteed only by the elimination of all disparities existing between the developed and the developing countries, including imbalances in information.

51. Information should not merely report the facts but should explain changes and help develop and train minds. It was a form of mobilization. The media should convey a total philosophy of the times, and perhaps an ideology that gave cause for hope.

52. Mr. ZEGHIB (Algeria) observed that the perception of the dramatic events that had shaken the world had become more of a factor than the events themselves, reflecting the importance of communication and information in shaping public opinion and, by extension, the modern world. All the barriers that had been set up to prevent the free circulation of ideas and the free expression of opinions were collapsing of their own accord, thanks to the formidable technological advances in communication.

53. In the belief that peace and understanding among peoples could not come about without freedom of information and thought, the non-aligned movement had launched the initial appeal for the establishment of a new world information and communication order, immediately denounced at the time as a possible threat to freedom of information. Yet the current state of affairs in the

(Mr. Zeghib, Algeria)

developing countries indicated that freedom of the press and information were threatened above all by an ultimate censorship consisting of lack of funds, qualified personnel or access to the latest techniques. In the developed countries, in the name of freedom of the press, veritable communication monopolies were shaping and distributing media information. More than 85 per cent of the information disseminated did not at any stage of its development or dissemination involve the 80 per cent of the world population to which it was directed. Hence the renewed call now for a new international information and communication order. Such an order would not only do away with disparities but create and build the capabilities of the developing countries and allow their message to be transmitted and heard, thus bolstering better understanding among peoples.

54. The determination and professionalism of the Director and staff of DPI in carrying out their mandate were commendable. His delegation noted, however, that in the report of the Secretary-General (A/46/449) no reference had been made to the new world information and communication order, although that was one of the most important aspects of the DPI mandate. At its next session, the Committee on Information should clarify the Department's mandate in more specific terms and should identify central points that should be given priority consideration in each of the areas dealt with by DPI, according to a specific timetable established by the Committee on Information.

55. No obstacles should remain to the free circulation of information. Those fighting for the establishment of a pluralistic press in every nation should give equal attention to the establishment of pluralistic sources of information among all nations. Only thus could cooperation among peoples be achieved.

56. Mr. HACHANI (Tunisia) said that Tunisia's information policy was based on freedom and diversity within the context of the universally recognized professional code of ethics. It was still true, however, that in the developing countries, only modest progress had been made in introducing a more balanced flow of information worldwide, and the valid principle of freedom of information did not, unfortunately, always obtain. A new information order within the context of the new world order should therefore be pursued, as should the work reported in documents A/46/449 and A/46/21. His delegation attached great importance to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in that context it was appreciative of DPI's efforts to publicize the attacks on the rights of the Palestinians. Other issues which would affect future generations, notably development, disarmament and the environment, also merited attention.

57. His delegation welcomed the outcome of the Windhoek seminar, and believed that journalistic training and access to information technology remained a priority in the establishment of a balanced and impartial flow of information which conveyed the values and principles of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations information centres should be assured of receiving the human

(Mr. Hachani, Tunisia)

and material resources required to fulfil their function in the optimum manner. To that end, the publications which they circulated should always be in the languages of the countries for which they were intended. Similarly, the press releases containing the resolutions, decisions and voting results adopted by the General Assembly, which were indispensable to those concerned, should be published in all the official languages, including Arabic.

58. Mr. MAHMOUD (Lebanon) said that information was the mirror and catalyst of events and developments at all levels worldwide, and provided scope for a wider international exchange of ideas and concepts. The free flow of information was also an important prerequisite for democracy. DPI was now expected to have a wider role and function, given that the new world order should enable the true problems which impeded development to be addressed more effectively. In that context, information was the proper channel through which to promote understanding and cooperation, and modernization and promotion of the mass media in the developing countries, through bilateral relations with the developed countries, was the surest way to bring about quantitative and qualitative improvements in the field of information itself. The envisaged world information order demanded a more equal flow of information in terms of both access and dissemination, in addition to a more objective coverage of regional and international issues.

59. His delegation acknowledged the complex task facing DPI, and also commended the role of the United Nations information centres. It supported the publication in Spanish and Arabic of the annual press release containing the resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly, since that would facilitate the work of various ministries and social and research centres abroad. Beirut continued to retain its position as the leading publishing capital in the Arab world, despite the domestic difficulties throughout which the work of the United Nations information centre had continued uninterrupted. His delegation looked forward to the nomination of a new director for the centre, and assured the Committee of the full cooperation of the Lebanese Government in enhancing the centre's future role both nationally and regionally.

60. Mr. FASEHUN (Nigeria) emphasized the central role of UNESCO in helping the developing countries improve their communications infrastructures. His delegation also regarded the consensus on information reached in 1990 as a welcome moral undertaking on the part of the developed countries to provide such assistance, which it suggested should be channelled unconditionally through bilateral and multilateral agencies. Nevertheless, the assistance already channelled through UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication had fallen far short of requirements. His delegation therefore called upon donors to increase substantially their donations in order to ensure increased freedom of information in the countries concerned.

(Mr. Fasehun, Nigeria)

61. With regard to the United Nations information centres, his delegation both welcomed and endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on Information. With that in mind, it called for centres in the developing countries, notably Dar-es-Salaam and Bujumbura, to be provided with directors in order to enable them to function properly, and expressed its belief that funding for the centres should be the responsibility of the United Nations. Nigeria's focus of concern over the information centres was attributable to the current difficulties being experienced by many developing countries, particularly in Africa, in securing access to information for use in schools and colleges. Moreover, the centres were often the only source of information on international politics and the United Nations itself, and likewise served as good research libraries.

62. His delegation welcomed DPI's multi-media approach in its efforts to publicize issues of high priority to the United Nations, and urged it to continue its activities against apartheid and to disseminate information on development in Africa as well as on human rights, disarmament and environment and development. DPI should be assured of receiving sufficient funding to enable it to fulfil its mandate, in which context his delegation welcomed the plan for inter-sessional consultations between DPI and the Committee on Information. Finally, it wished to suggest informal meetings between the Bureau of the Committee on Information, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee for Programme and Coordination in order to ensure that they were aware of the demands faced by DPI. Member States should be prepared to meet the additional costs incurred as a result of the increased membership and success of the United Nations.

63. Mr. CHAFIK (Morocco) said that while international relations could be improved by the development of information and communication media, the unequal access to the relevant technology and knowledge was such as to engender conflict. In fact, the monopoly of the developed countries in that field threatened to endanger the very survival of the developing countries. A new world order of information and communication, corresponding to the new world economic order, should therefore allow a democratization of international relations, restore a balance in the circulation of information and boost the exchange of information between the developed and developing countries. The disparate flow of information from and to those two categories of countries would only diminish with cooperation. International law on the issue had its failings, and in some instances there were no applicable regulations. Technically speaking, the gap between the developed and developing countries was ever-widening, particularly with the emergence of state-of-the-art methods of communication. The developing countries had opted for dialogue as their best option for redressing the situation and establishing an exchange of information and ideas in the hope of strengthening and increasing cooperation. His delegation accordingly welcomed and commended the efforts of UNESCO, DPI and the Committee on Information, and encouraged any bilateral or multilateral initiatives aimed at helping the developing countries escape from their position of dependency.

(Mr. Chafik, Morocco)

64. Regarding the activities of DPI, whose achievements were admirable considering the financial constraints it faced, his delegation felt there should be more dissemination of information relevant to the developing countries. Since the United Nations information centres were most suited to that purpose, the network should be expanded and the infrastructure improved in order to ensure optimum conditions for fulfilling their function of creating an awareness of the Organization and its work. In conclusion, his delegation expressed encouragement for DPI's efforts to strengthen its cooperation with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries.

65. Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) said that, in the Committee on Information, her delegation had joined the consensus on the draft resolution now circulated in document A/SPC/46/L.6, despite its reservations on paragraph 1 (m). Costa Rica would have wanted the second sentence of subparagraph (m), now reading "The Committee takes note of the requests of Costa Rica and Bulgaria to have information components in their countries;", to read "The Committee also recommends consideration of the requests of Costa Rica and Bulgaria to have information centres in their countries;".

66. For the information of the Special Political Committee, her delegation had had a draft resolution originally circulated informally by Costa Rica in the Committee on Information circulated to members as draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.8. In it, Costa Rica proposed the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Costa Rica, taking advantage of the facilities and premises of the University for Peace. Any financial implications of that proposal would be minimal, because the plenary Assembly had just adopted by consensus a draft resolution establishing a Trust Fund for Peace based on voluntary contributions to support the University's various activities.

67. Costa Rica did not intend to oppose consensus in the Special Political Committee, but would like its draft resolution and the relevant press releases to be reflected in the Committee's report to the plenary Assembly. Her delegation would also not insist that action be taken on draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.8, in the hope that the Committee would accede to the modest request that it should itself recommend the establishment of an information centre as proposed by Costa Rica.

68. The CHAIRMAN noted that Costa Rica was not requesting action on draft resolution A/SPC/46/L.8.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.