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Chairman: Mr. S. Amjad ALI (Pakistan).

Freedom of information (*concluded*): (b) Dissemination by governments of resolutions adopted by organs of the United Nations and communicated to them by the Secretary-General (A/2172, chapter V, section VI, A/2173, A/C.3/L.247/Rev.1)

[Item 29 (b)]*

DRAFT RESOLUTION SUBMITTED BY EGYPT (A/C.3/L.247/Rev.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN noted that at the 440th meeting the representative of Norway, speaking on a point of order with reference to the proposal by the delegation of Egypt (A/C.3/L.247), had inquired whether the General Assembly could amend a resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council. In the Chairman's opinion, although a Council resolution could not be amended as such, the General Assembly could take whatever decision it chose concerning a resolution transmitted to it by the Council for action. In any event, any possible procedural difficulties had been averted, as the representative of Egypt had resubmitted his proposal in the form of a new draft resolution for adoption by the General Assembly (A/C.3/L.247/Rev.1).

2. Mr. AZMI (Egypt) recalled that the matter under consideration had been submitted to the Third Committee as a result of the adoption of a resolution by the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press at its fifth session (E/2190, para. 81) and the subsequent adoption by the Economic and Social Council of its resolution 442 D (XIV), which reproduced in part the wording of the Sub-Commission's resolution. The texts of both decisions were set forth in the note by the Secretary-General (A/2173).

3. His own draft resolution, which was before the Committee, contained an appeal not only to govern-

ments but also to the Secretary-General and to the information media. In connexion with the assistance requested of the Secretary-General, he stressed the fact that the United Nations information centres throughout the world should maintain close contact with, and distribute the texts of resolutions to, the governments, newspapers and other information media of the countries in which they were situated. Those centres had a special and important part to play in the dissemination of United Nations resolutions, and he hoped that the funds necessary to carry out that work would be made available to them by the General Assembly. It was essential that the United Nations should apply itself to the task of making official information concerning its own work available to the peoples of the world.

4. He regretted that he could not accept the USSR amendments (A/C.3/L.284) to his draft resolution. Paragraphs 2 and 3 of the draft resolution, which the USSR wished to see deleted, were essential parts of the text; and he saw no reason for officially endorsing the practice of governments of not disseminating the texts of resolutions which they had not supported.

5. He was in general agreement with the amendments submitted jointly by the delegations of France and the United States (A/C.3/L.285/Rev.1), but asked whether the Committee thought that the importance of a resolution should be measured by the relative position in the United Nations of the organ adopting it.

6. Mr. HESSEL (France) explained that the sponsors of the amendment did not consider it advisable to recommend the wide dissemination of those resolutions of subsidiary organs which were provisional in character and would not become binding upon the Member States until they had been approved and possibly amended by the principal organs. Moreover, the dissemination of purely procedural resolutions might damage the reputation of the United Nations by creating the impression that its decisions were without practical or definite results.

* Indicates the item number on the agenda of the General Assembly.

7. Mr. AZMI (Egypt), following the French representative's explanation, regretted he could not accept the first of the amendments submitted by the delegations of France and the United States. Subsidiary bodies of the United Nations often adopted resolutions which were of great importance in themselves, even though they were provisional and the public should be given an opportunity to acquaint itself with those decisions and to exert its influence upon the subsequent debate in the principal organs of the United Nations. He accepted the second and third amendments submitted by the same two delegations.

8. Mr. LAMBROS (Greece) supported the draft resolution. Its main defect, a tendency to be too comprehensive, had been corrected by the second and third amendments of France and the United States. Moreover, even if the Committee decided to recommend dissemination only of the resolutions adopted by the principal organs of the United Nations, no government would be prohibited thereby from disseminating the texts of any important resolutions adopted by subsidiary bodies.

9. With regard to paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, it should be noted that the text recommended the dissemination of "information" concerning the resolutions in question, in addition to the previous recommendations for the dissemination of the resolutions themselves.

10. In that connexion, he drew attention to an important omission in the text of his amendment to that paragraph, as given in document A/C.3/L.291; the text, which he wished to add at the end of paragraph 4, should read: ". . . drawing on the appropriate services of the United Nations for the presentation in non-technical language of these resolutions"¹

11. Mr. DEDIJER (Yugoslavia) warmly supported the draft resolution, which he considered both constructive and timely. The world was not sufficiently well acquainted either with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations or with the decisions taken by United Nations bodies; certain governments had passed over the work of the United Nations in silence, as far as their people were concerned, while others had exploited the ignorance of their people by indulging in "smear campaigns" against the Organization. He was convinced that increased knowledge would lead to increased understanding and sympathy for the efforts of the United Nations. Of course, not all the decisions taken by the United Nations in the past had been progressive in character but the situation was improving year by year, and it was increasingly important that the public should understand the difficulties facing the United Nations and be in a position to appreciate its accomplishments.

12. As regards the various amendments to the draft resolution, he agreed with the representative of Egypt that point 1 of the amendments submitted by the delegations of France and the United States was an excessively formal approach to the matter. For example, such an approach would require the General Assembly to recommend wide dissemination of a formal resolu-

tion adopted by the Economic and Social Council transmitting to the Assembly without comment a resolution of the Commission on Human Rights on the subject of the right of self-determination, but would ignore the text of the latter resolution, which was far more important. He endorsed point 2 of the amendments submitted by those two delegations.

13. He could not support the USSR amendments (A/C.3/L.284), which proposed, in effect, that the General Assembly should sanction the right of States to exercise discrimination with respect to decisions of the United Nations. In his opinion, the peoples of the world should be acquainted with all decisions of substance taken by the United Nations, and should assess and judge for themselves the work of the Organization and the participation of their own representatives; they should not be treated as incapable of doing their own thinking. Moreover, he pointed out that the amendments were in direct contradiction to a decision taken by the Trusteeship Council in 1948 that United Nations resolutions should be published and disseminated in the Trust Territories. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had endorsed that decision, stating in the Trusteeship Council that effective measures should be taken to bring those resolutions to the attention of the indigenous inhabitants, and that consequently, owing to the low level of literacy among those inhabitants, the texts should be translated into the indigenous languages, and schools and special courses should be established to disseminate information on the activities of all United Nations bodies. The USSR delegation had, apparently, abandoned that position and would deprive the peoples of the Member States of a privilege enjoyed by the inhabitants of the Trust Territories.

14. The Yugoslav delegation viewed the work done by the Third Committee at the current session in the matter of freedom of information as the most positive and constructive it had yet accomplished in that field. The patient efforts of the members to arrive at compromise solutions was an indication of the spirit of co-operation which had prevailed and the genuine desire of the Committee to achieve concrete results. The five resolutions which the Committee had adopted represented concrete and positive action and, in the opinion of the Yugoslav representative, the adoption of the draft resolution under consideration would be a worthy conclusion of the Committee's work.

15. Mr. GREEN (United States of America) pointed out that his delegation was less concerned with the problem of disseminating United Nations resolutions than some other countries, because the Organization's Headquarters were in the United States. Even if his country were directly concerned with the matter, it would not discriminate, as the USSR amendment proposed, between the resolutions of which it approved and those against which it had voted.

16. The United States delegation approved of the principle of the Egyptian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.247/Rev.1) but wanted it to be drafted in the most practical terms possible. The dissemination of resolutions was an elaborate process involving much time and money and it was therefore essential, especially for the benefit of countries with modest facilities and those which did not use the official languages of the

¹ This text was subsequently issued under the symbol A/C.3/L.291/Rev.1.

United Nations, to limit the scope of such dissemination.

17. He noted that the Department of State issued an average of four Press releases a day, six days a week, in 2,500 copies each, as well as six Press releases a day on behalf of other government agencies and that the United States Mission to the United Nations also issued several hundred Press releases a year. For that reason, the United States Government wished to be sure that the resolution did not add an excessive burden upon the Governments of Member States.

18. He pointed out that in 1951, 306 resolutions had been adopted by the General Assembly and the Councils, 102 by the functional and regional Commissions and 6 by the Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations. It was obviously impossible for all governments to give full coverage to those 414 resolutions and the United States and French delegations had therefore proposed that only the substantive decisions of the principal organs should be referred to specifically.

19. Mr. SOBOLEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) did not see any necessity for adopting a special resolution on the dissemination of United Nations decisions; the United Nations had a special service for such dissemination, which gave extremely wide coverage to the resolutions of all United Nations organs.

20. If the Committee considered it advisable to adopt such a resolution, however, it was essential to include the reservation contained in point 1 of the USSR amendment (A/C.3/L.284), since governments could not be obliged to take special measures for the dissemination of unjust resolutions against which they had voted. The Egyptian representative had stated that the USSR view was implicit in the resolution; there was therefore all the more reason for stating it directly and clearly in his draft resolution. The Yugoslav representative had either misunderstood or deliberately misrepresented the purpose of the USSR amendment. In so far as the Soviet Union was concerned, information on the work and decisions of the United Nations occupied an important place in the Press and radio of the USSR.

21. The USSR delegation considered paragraph 4 of the Egyptian draft resolution to be acceptable, but thought that paragraphs 2 and 3 were redundant and should therefore be deleted in order to make the resolution more effective.

22. He asked for a separate vote on the USSR amendments.

23. Mr. TSAO (China) would support the Egyptian draft resolution, but hoped that the Egyptian representative would also accept point 1 of the French and United States amendments. The dissemination of all the resolutions adopted by the multifarious organs of the United Nations would constitute an undue burden both on governments and on the United Nations Secretariat. Moreover, the public in the Member States was entitled to have a balanced picture of the Organization's work; subsidiary organs might adopt important resolutions, but those resolutions might be revised or reversed by the principal organs.

24. Mr. AZKOUL (Lebanon) pointed out that the Economic and Social Council resolution referred to in

the Egyptian draft resolution was based on a paragraph of a resolution adopted by the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press, which had been submitted by the Lebanese representative on that Sub-Commission. His delegation therefore approved of the purposes of the draft resolution, which were not only to make the resolutions of the United Nations known to the general public, but to enable the peoples to assess their governments' actions and behaviour in the United Nations. Those purposes were upheld in all the texts before the Committee, with the exception of the USSR amendments.

25. With regard to the question whether the resolutions to be disseminated should be only those of the principal organs, he considered that the expert opinions expressed by members of the subsidiary organs were interesting and informative and should therefore be communicated to the public. The practical difficulties of ensuring the dissemination of all such resolutions were, however, obvious and he would therefore abstain from voting on point 1 of the French and United States amendments.

26. Another practical difficulty with which many governments were faced was that many United Nations resolutions reached governments several months after they had been adopted. In such circumstances, it was difficult to maintain the interest of the Press in those decisions.

27. He therefore proposed, as an amendment to paragraph 3 of the Egyptian draft resolution, the word "rapid" should be inserted before the word "dissemination".

28. Mr. MANI (India) agreed with the principle of the draft resolution, but thought that some amendments to it were desirable.

29. He would vote for the joint French and United States amendments and for the second USSR amendments, since all governments had their own procedure in the matter and no special procedure could therefore be devised.

30. He proposed the deletion of the words "through customary channels" in paragraph 1 of the draft resolution, since it was for each government to decide on the media through which specific resolutions should be disseminated. He would not however, press his amendment if the the Egyptian representative could not accept it.

31. Mr. BAROODY (Saudi Arabia) was in general agreement with the principle of the Egyptian draft resolution, provided that it constituted a recommendation to governments.

32. Every resolution represented a conflict of ideas and it was extremely difficult and sometimes impossible to give a clear picture of the manner in which certain decisions had been reached. As the Lebanese representative had pointed out, resolutions emanating from subsidiary organs might be more important than the decisions of the principal organs; he would therefore vote against the joint French and United States amendments.

33. Since the purpose of the draft resolution was to make the United Nations activities known to the public, it was essential also to make reference to the

explanation of certain resolutions, which might have been unjust; otherwise, the picture would be distorted.

34. The Saudi Arabian delegation would abstain from voting on the individual paragraphs of the draft resolution, but would vote for the text as a whole, since it did not impose binding obligations on governments.

35. Mr. JODAH (Sweden) drew attention to the last phrase of paragraph 1 of the Egyptian draft resolution, which read "in accordance with their procedures for releasing news concerning international affairs". There was no special procedure of that kind in his country and he would therefore prefer the paragraph to stop at the words "customary channels".

36. He asked for a separate vote on the last phrase.

37. Baron VAN ZUYLEN VAN NYEVELT DE HAAR (Belgium) would support the Egyptian draft resolution and the joint French and United States amendments.

38. It was obviously impossible to disseminate all United Nations resolutions, but it was essential to make known the important decisions that had been reached. In Belgium, as in many other countries, there were no means of obliging journalists to give publicity to the United Nations resolutions.

39. Mr. DUNLOP (New Zealand) agreed with representatives who had stressed the practical difficulty of disseminating all United Nations resolutions. The Egyptian draft resolution, however, allowed wide discretion to governments in disseminating the resolutions of subsidiary organs, and the joint French and United States amendments merely served to reduce the burden of the obligation to disseminate such resolutions.

40. He did not agree with the USSR representative's interpretation of the limitations that might be imposed; the question was that of the importance of the resolutions concerned, and not of whether or not a government agreed or disagreed with them.

41. He agreed with the Saudi Arabian representative that some explanation of important resolutions was required and thought that point 2 of the USSR amendments might be acceptable, since paragraphs 2 and 3 of the draft resolution did not seem to add much to the text. Nevertheless, the discussion had shown that some representatives attached importance to those paragraphs. He would hesitate to support any provision calling for measures if no such measures were clearly envisaged.

42. It would be more in keeping with the Committee's views to replace the words "take special measures to disseminate" in paragraph 2 by the words "pay special attention to the dissemination of". Such a modification might also take into account the Saudi Arabian representative's reference to the explanation of resolutions. He moved a formal amendment to that effect.

43. Mr. MEADE (United Kingdom) supported the Swedish representative's request for a separate vote on the last phrase of paragraph 1 of the draft resolution.

44. Mrs. AFNAN (Iraq) supported the Egyptian draft resolution in general.

45. The world heard a great deal about the dissension in the political organs of the United Nations and very

little about the patient and constructive work performed by the non-political committees and commissions. As a result of that one-sided information, public opinion was turning against the United Nations.

46. Her delegation was unable to accept point 1 of the amendment submitted by France and the United States, because it felt strongly that the real achievement of the United Nations lay in the work of such bodies as the Commission on Human Rights, the Commission on the Status of Women and the specialized agencies, and consequently it was their activities, rather than those of the principal organs, that should be more widely publicized.

47. Dissemination of resolutions by governments was not enough to achieve the desired objective; even when it had all the resolutions before it, the Press in each country chose those which it wished to bring to public notice. Consequently paragraph 4 of the Egyptian draft resolution, which appealed to the Press to give wider coverage to United Nations resolutions, was very important, and she wished it had been worded more emphatically.

48. In reply to previous speakers, she said that States Members of the United Nations should have no difficulty in circulating resolutions which they had opposed, as the Press would most certainly not merely publish a given resolution but comment upon it so that it would be seen in its proper context.

49. She would vote for the deletion of the final phrase in paragraph 1 and of paragraphs 2 and 3 of the draft resolution.

50. Mr. HUNEIDI (Syria) remarked that many United Nations resolutions on economic and social subjects were not implemented largely because the public was not aware of their existence, in spite of the excellent work of the Department of Public Information. The Egyptian draft resolution would therefore serve a very useful purpose, and he would vote for it, as well as for points 1 and 2 of the amendments submitted by France and the United States and for the Swedish oral amendment.

51. Mr. AZMI (Egypt) accepted the Lebanese amendment proposing the insertion of the word "rapid" before the word "dissemination" in paragraph 3, and the Greek amendment (A/C.3/L.291/Rev.1).

52. He was unable to accept the Indian suggestion to delete the words "through customary channels", and assured the Indian representative that those words had been put in precisely to indicate that governments need not establish any special procedure but might use such methods as they considered most practical.

53. In reply to the Saudi Arabian representative, he observed that a resolution adopted by the United Nations was a fact which could not be denied merely because a government disagreed with its contents. Any such resolution appearing in the national Press would of course be commented on and explained by the Press, which would no doubt also present the views of the government concerned.

54. He was still unable to accept point 1 of the amendment submitted by France and the United States, changing the mentions of "organs" to "principal organs"; if an important resolution emanated from a

minor body, it most certainly deserved to be made generally known.

55. Mr. DEDIJER (Yugoslavia) wished to draw the attention of the Indian representative, who was prepared to accept the amendment proposed by France and the United States, to the fact that the amendment would exclude the dissemination of many good resolutions dealing with substance, such as the resolution on the right of self-determination submitted by India and adopted by the Commission on Human Rights.

56. Mr. MANI (India) replied that he interpreted the words "principal organs" broadly, rather than in their technical sense, and that the Commission on Human Rights and other important commissions were, in his view, principal organs of the United Nations.

57. Mr. DEDIJER (Yugoslavia) in reply quoted Article 7 of the United Nations Charter, in which the six principal organs of the United Nations were formally defined.

58. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote on the Egyptian draft resolution (A/C.3/L.247/Rev.1) and on the various amendments to it.

59. Mr. PAZHWAQ (Afghanistan), speaking on a point of order, asked that a separate vote should be taken on the words "dealing with questions of substance" in paragraph 1, and on the words "in non-technical language" in paragraph 4; both of those phrases had been accepted by the Egyptian representative.

60. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the words "dealing with questions of substance", which had been proposed in the joint amendment (A/C.3/L.285/Rev.1, point 2) and which had been accepted by the representative of Egypt for insertion after the word "resolution" in paragraph 1 of the operative part of his draft resolution.

The words were adopted by 40 votes to 1, with 9 abstentions.

61. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the amendment submitted by France and the United States of America (A/C.3/L.285/Rev.1, point 1), calling for insertion of the word "principal" before the word "organ" in paragraph 1 of the draft resolution.

The amendment was adopted by 28 votes to 13, with 10 abstentions.

62. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the phrase "in accordance with their procedures for releasing news concerning international affairs" in paragraph 1 of the operative part of the draft resolution.

The phrase was rejected by 18 votes to 17, with 16 abstentions.

63. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the USSR amendment (A/C.3/L.284, point 1) calling for the insertion of the words "provided that they agree with the particular resolution" after the words "concerning international affairs" at the end of paragraph 1 of the draft resolution.

The amendment was rejected by 35 votes to 5, with 10 abstentions.

64. At the request of Mr. PAZHWAQ (Afghanistan), the CHAIRMAN put paragraph 1 to the vote as a whole, as amended.

Paragraph 1 as a whole, as amended, was adopted by 45 votes to 5, with 1 abstention.

65. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the USSR amendment (A/C.3/L.284, point 2) calling for the deletion of paragraph 2 of the draft resolution.

The amendment was adopted by 15 votes to 12, with 25 abstentions.

66. The CHAIRMAN noted that all the other amendments to paragraph 2 had automatically fallen.

67. He put to the vote the USSR amendment (A/C.3/L.284, point 2) calling for the deletion of paragraph 3.

The amendment was rejected by 23 votes to 13, with 14 abstentions.

68. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the amendment submitted by France and the United States of America (A/C.3/L.285/Rev.1, point 1) calling for the insertion of the word "principal" before the word "organs" in paragraph 3.

The amendment was adopted by 28 votes to 13, with 11 abstentions.

69. At the request of Mr. PAZHWAQ (Afghanistan), the CHAIRMAN put to the vote paragraph 3, as amended.

Paragraph 3, as amended, was adopted by 46 votes to 1, with 4 abstentions.

70. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the amendment submitted by France and the United States of America (A/C.3/L.285/Rev.1, point 1) calling for the insertion of the word "principal" before the word "organs" in paragraph 4.

The amendment was not adopted, 16 votes being cast in favour and 16 against, with 19 abstentions.

71. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the words "drawing on the appropriate services of the United Nations" proposed in the Greek amendment (A/C.3/L.291/Rev.1) for insertion at the end of paragraph 4 of the draft resolution. Those words had been accepted by Egypt.

The words were adopted by 22 votes to 6, with 24 abstentions.

72. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the words "in non-technical language" proposed in the Greek amendment (A/C.3/L.291/Rev.1) to paragraph 4 of the draft resolution. Those words had also been accepted by Egypt.

The words were rejected by 8 votes to 2, with 38 abstentions.

73. The CHAIRMAN put to the vote the words "for the presentation of these resolutions" proposed in the Greek amendment to paragraph 4 of the draft resolution.

The words were adopted by 14 votes to 1, with 35 abstentions.

74. The CHAIRMAN called for a vote on the draft resolution as a whole, as amended.

75. Mr. DEDIJER (Yugoslavia) asked for a vote by roll-call.

A vote was taken by roll-call.

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

In favour: Liberia, Netherlands, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Syria, Thailand, Turkey, Union of South Africa, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Burma, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon.

Against: Poland, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia.

Abstaining: New Zealand.

The draft resolution as a whole, as amended, was adopted by 44 votes to 5, with 1 abstention.

76. Mr. AZMI (Egypt) drew attention to the fact that the French text of the resolution as amended spoke of *des organes principaux* rather than *les organes principaux*; consequently what was meant was not only the principal organs of the United Nations as listed in the Charter but other important organs as well.

77. Mr. HESSEL (France) was unable to accept that interpretation. The words "principal organs" had a definite and unequivocal meaning in the United Nations, and any attempt to broaden that meaning would merely unduly complicate the task imposed by the resolution on the Secretariat and the various governments.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.