

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. EL-CHOUFI (Syrian Arab Republic)

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

AGENDA ITEM 53: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (A/34/21, A/34/148, A/34/149, A/34/195 and A/34/574)

- (a) CO-OPERATION AND ASSISTANCE IN THE APPLICATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF NATIONAL INFORMATION AND MASS COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS FOR SOCIAL PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT: REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
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1. Mr. MASLI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) introducing the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations public information policies and activities (A/34/574),^{*} said that in the six months since he had become head of the Department of Public Information, he had been made keenly aware that the present period was a particularly fascinating and challenging one where communication and information were concerned. In the framework of General Assembly resolution 33/115, the United Nations and its specialized agencies had a major contribution to make to the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order. As early as 1946, the General Assembly had stated (resolution 13 (I)) that the United Nations could not achieve the purposes for which it had been created unless its work was fully supported by the peoples of the world. In his report on the Work of the Organization to the current session of the General Assembly (A/34/1) the Secretary-General had said that the United Nations must have solid public support and understanding, and had expressed the hope that all Member States would help to build such support.

* The full text of this statement will be issued as a document.

2. The Department of Public Information had received invaluable assistance in clarifying its thinking about current problems from the discussions which had taken place during the year in the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities and its Ad Hoc Working Group.
3. Of the three major challenges which the Department had to face, the first was the extent to which it should work through established governmental and non-governmental information agencies, as opposed to undertaking positive information activities of its own. In defining the basic mandate of the Department in 1946, the General Assembly had stated in resolution 13 (I) that the Department should primarily assist and rely upon the co-operation of the established governmental and non-governmental agencies of information to provide the public with information about the United Nations. It should on its own initiative, engage in positive informational activities to supplement the services of existing information agencies where they were insufficient to promote an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations among the peoples of the world.
4. That mandate was still valid. As the United Nations could not inform every individual about its aims and activities, the established media outlets must be relied upon in the expectation that they would produce multiplier effects: in fact, more vigorous action should be taken to expand the Department's relationships with non-governmental organizations and educational institutions engaged in information.
5. However, it had been envisaged from the beginning that the Department would have to undertake positive informational activities of its own. The Department had always produced finished information material, and would continue to do so within its means, but its ability to do so was now threatened by the demands placed on it as a result of the proliferation of United Nations meetings, conferences and other events. An increasing proportion of the staff was absorbed by the coverage of day-to-day events, as distinct from information in depth, with the result that some important publications had been delayed, and the production of United Nations films had been reduced. That was a disquieting situation, as media reporting about the United Nations was far from satisfactory. There was a clear need for the United Nations to reach the public with its own publications and films, in order to supplement the information made available through established governmental and non-governmental media outlets. In fact, it had been suggested in the Committee of 41 that the United Nations should use a radio frequency assigned to it in New York for its own broadcasts in order to counter the trend towards partial coverage of United Nations activities, which had recently become evident in the headquarters area. The Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had also discussed the possibility of interagency financing of the publication Development Forum, which had so far been dependent on voluntary contributions and was in serious financial straits. The views of Member States on that point would be useful.
6. A second set of problems had emerged in recent years as a result of the admission to the United Nations of many new States, most of them developing

(r. Akashi)

countries, reinforced by the recent global insistence on the need for a more effective world information and communication order, as expressed in General Assembly resolution 33/115. The Department was closely following the international debate within UNCTAD on the implementation of the new world information and communication order, and the Secretariat would reflect the outcome of that debate in its planning and programming. The Department had a serious obligation to provide all Member States, without discrimination, with a continuous and adequate flow of information about the United Nations. Because of the less advanced state of the national communication media in most developing countries, the Department's material for those countries usually had to be available in a form suitable for immediate use. There must also be an adequate linguistic balance in the Department's output, and that could not be achieved without additional resources. The stringency of the Secretary General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 1980-1981 had made it impossible to include a provision for the establishment of a much-needed small linguistic adaptation and production unit.

7. A related aspect of the same problem was the growing need to diversify the content and form of information material to reflect the different preoccupations of various segments of the public in the Member States, and their regional, national and local differences. In its report on the United Nations Information Centres (A/34/379), the Joint Inspection Unit emphasized the growing importance of the regional element in information. The comments of the Secretary General on that report had been issued in document A/34/379/Add.1. He was sure that the General Assembly would wish United Nations field information activities to be examined further in the coming year, with a view to strengthening the network of UN information centres. The Department was also considering options to augmenting the regional and subregional component in the Department as a whole.

8. Another aspect of the problem, closely linked to the availability of resources, was the fact that the Department was only equipped to work with one of the world's three basic colour television systems, thus placing television organizations in many developing countries at a strong disadvantage.

9. A significant part of the Department's contribution to a more balanced world information and communication order was its readiness to assist in the training of young journalists and broadcasters from developing countries, as noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/34/574). Another developing service within the Department was its provision of news and features on a regular basis to the Press Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries.

10. The third set of problems confronting his Department arose from the limited resources available for information as against the virtually unlimited demand. It was a sobering fact that the percentage of the regular United Nations budget devoted to information activities had declined from over 10 per cent in 1946 to less than 4 per cent at the present time. Yet new requests for extra information activities were constantly received from various United Nations organs, and 34 of the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly's thirty-third session

(Mr. Akashi)

had contained specific public information mandates to be implemented by the Secretariat. As there was no realistic prospect of substantially increasing the budgetary resources for information, more and better information must be produced with the existing resources, by constantly assessing the relative merits of each of the Department's activities in the light of changing needs. His primary concern was to establish clearer priorities and he intended to evolve a more coherent system of planning, programming and evaluation.

11. As an increasing number of important international conferences were being held under United Nations auspices each year, the budget of each conference should include an adequate information component to ensure that the proceedings were effectively covered. The Department had started work on standardizing the information components for different kinds of conferences, taking into account the types of coverage and the number of languages required. The Department was also aware of the need for better co-ordination, both in its own work and between the Department and other units of the Secretariat engaged in information work. The Department had a well established structure of three media divisions and one thematic division, but he was giving serious consideration to possible modification of that structure, as well as to the need for more consolidated planning of work programmes, more flexible use of resources, and more co-ordinated evaluation of the feedback.

12. For the first time, the Report of the Secretary-General on United Nations public information policies and activities (A/34/57A) included a description of the work performed by each unit. That was a necessary preliminary step towards a more systemized approach to the totality of United Nations information work. The basic purpose of such an approach was to make better use of scarce resources and to ensure that the Organization projected a clear image to the world public.

13. With regard to the question of system-wide co-ordination of information, the Joint United Nations Information Committee had made considerable progress in persuading the autonomous agencies to co-ordinate their activities more closely, and even to plan jointly for such events as the International Year of the Child and the Eleventh Special Session of the General Assembly on Development and International Economic Co-operation. The Department would pursue its efforts for a system-wide approach in collaboration with the specialized agencies and organizations.

14. However, no amount of co-ordination and harmonization could replace the need for imagination and freshness of approach allied with the necessary objectivity and balance. A recently published booklet United Nations. Image and reality. Questions and answers about management, finance and people sought to present in an easily comprehensible form some of the basic administrative and financial facts about the Organization. The response to the booklet had been generally positive and the Department was considering treating other subjects of concern to the United Nations in a similar format. In the vital field of public information, the Department looked to the United Nations membership as a whole for support and guidance.

15. Mr. MAKAGIANSKI (Assistant Director-General of UNESCO) said that at the twentieth session of the UNESCO General Conference, the notion of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order had been at the heart of all the debates on communication. The consensus Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War (resolution 4/9.3/2) had been adopted by acclamation. The General Conference had also discussed the interim report of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, chaired by Mr. Sean MacBride, and in its final report had invited the Commission to propose concrete measures for the establishment of a more effective world information and communication order. Another resolution (4/9.4/2) requested the Director-General to hold consultations designed to lead to the provision to developing countries of technological and other means for promoting a free flow and a wider and better balanced exchange of information of all kinds, and to convene for that purpose a planning meeting of representatives of Governments, to develop a proposal for institutional arrangements to systematize collaborative consultation on communication development activities, needs and plans. Those resolutions constituted the framework of all UNESCO programmes for the immediate future, and had given momentum to the principles embodied in the concept of a new world information and communication order. In its resolution 33/115 the General Assembly had reaffirmed the same objectives.

16. The "spirit of Paris" had also been reflected in the international debates on communication which had taken place in the past year. There had been increased appreciation in the developed countries of the attitudes of third world countries and seminars and studies had been undertaken in the northern hemisphere to develop positive proposals for international co-operation. It was increasingly recognized that the interests of developed and developing countries were inseparable, the prosperity of the former being closely bound up with the growth and development of the latter.

17. The UNESCO and United Nations resolutions on communication had been welcomed by the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Asia and Oceania, convened by UNESCO in Kuala Lumpur in February 1979, the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Organization of African Unity at Addis Ababa in April 1979, the Intergovernmental Council for the Co-ordination of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries at Loné in April 1979, the Latin American Federation of Journalists meeting at Caracas in July 1979, and the Tashkent Seminar for Journalists, organized in September 1979 by the National Commission for UNESCO of the Soviet Union. In September 1979, the Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries at Havana had noted the positive outcome of the twentieth session of the General Conference of UNESCO, and recognized UNESCO's positive role in studying problems of communication and in working towards a more balanced flow of information between the developing and the developed countries.

* The full text of this statement will be issued as a document.

(Mr. Makagiansar, UNESCO)

The Conference had requested UNESCO to continue to assist non-aligned and developing countries in setting up appropriate national and regional structures in the field of communications and in training technical personnel in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/115 A, B and C.

18. Part A of that resolution requested the Director-General of UNESCO to draw up a model plan for co-operation and assistance in the application and improvement of national information and mass communication systems for social progress and development, including the elaboration of a proposal for institutional arrangements to systematize collaborative consultation on communication development activities, needs and plans. That proposal would be elaborated by the Intergovernmental Planning Conference on Communication Development, to be held in UNESCO House, Paris, from 14 to 21 April 1980. At the invitation of the Government of the United States, a preliminary meeting of experts was now in progress in Washington, and was being attended by about 30 specialists including planners, scholars, media practitioners and development administrators. The Planning Conference itself would provide an opportunity for discussing ways of channelling to the developing countries the resources needed to create infrastructures and train personnel in order to bring about a free flow and a wider and better balanced exchange of information. The Conference should also try to show how regular consultations between interested countries and agencies could be achieved to mobilize such resources, and how the relevant bilateral and multilateral co-operation programmes could be better co-ordinated. The Conference might also advise the Director-General on the desirability of seeking to establish machinery for improving co-operation between UNESCO and other international institutions involved in communication. The General Assembly might wish to re-examine the question at its thirty-fifth session in the light of the results of the Conference.

19. He then drew attention to the report of UNESCO activities from October 1978 to October 1979, contained in document A/34/149, which had been submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/115 B. That report concerned, first, the resolutions adopted by the Twentieth UNESCO General Conference, second, the principal programmes initiated or continued in the fields of communication research and policies, the flow of information and development of communications systems and, third, a background and survey of the activities of the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, which was to hold its final session the following week. The two reports were complementary: one concerned specifically co-operation and assistance for the development of communications, while the other dealt more generally with the organization of communications systems designed to permit a freer and more balanced exchange of information, and with the practical aspects of the programme. That complementarity reflected UNESCO's philosophy that the present communication situation could not be remedied, nor could a new information order be established merely by accelerating the transfer of resources and technical and financial assistance to the developing countries. As the Director-General had said in his reply to the general policy debate at the Twentieth General Conference, it was also necessary to protect all the fundamental freedoms and to redesign the relationship of communications to knowledge, wealth and power in order to ensure

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respect for the cultural identity of each state and the freedom of every country to determine its own communications infrastructure.

10. What was now UNESCO viewed its role in the common effort to change existing conditions in the field of international communications. The first step towards fulfilling such a role lay in formulating a concept of communications, and, for that, UNESCO had set up panels of experts, such as the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems. Their objective was to bring together ideas and opinions with a view to identifying ways of improving the contribution of communication media to the progress of peoples and mutual understanding between them.

11. The Commission had held several sessions and seminars devoted to such questions as news collection and dissemination, regional co-operation among developing countries and culture. The background material for the Commission's discussion, which was listed in appendix II of document A/34/149, provided a wealth of information. The Commission's recommendations were to be finalized at its last session the following year and submitted in its report to the Director-General, that report would be published in March 1980 and would be given the widest possible distribution.

12. Meanwhile, the UNESCO secretariat continued to carry out its active communications programme, inspired by the spirit of Paris - namely, to reach agreement by consensus rather than by confrontation - and to be guided by the evolving notion of the new world information and communication order and by the principles of the Paris Media Declaration.

13. The UNESCO report (A/34/149) also contained a comprehensive list of the activities undertaken since the thirty-third session of the General Assembly. Those activities covered a wide range of programmes, that represented a unique, integrative approach to current world communication problems for which UNESCO had assumed responsibility since its inception.

14. However, UNESCO's increasing involvement in communications and its contributions in that field, together with the efforts of other United Nations organizations and various forms of multilateral and bilateral co-operation had thus far failed to change substantially either the national or international communication situation or to replace dependency by equal partnership.

15. The growing disparities between the developed and developing countries in the field of communications hampered international co-operation and understanding which could only be meaningful and effective if they were based on an equal partner relationship. The global picture, which showed that most of the world's population was still deprived of the basic capabilities needed for modern communications and that those capabilities were concentrated in the industrialized countries, was even more discouraging in respect of the individual media. For example, 40 countries still did not have a news agency, and very few national

(Mr. Mahalingam, UNESCO)

news agencies had been created in 1979. In short, as one UNESCO resolution stated, the present communication order in the world was far from satisfactory.

25. In his reply to the general policy debate at the Twentieth General Conference, the Director-General had also emphasized that energetic steps must be taken to assist the countries of the third world to strengthen their communication and information potential, to develop their infrastructure and to train the necessary personnel, for a freer and more balanced flow of information could only be achieved by removing the obstacles involved. That task continued to prove difficult for the international community. In fact, the existing imbalance in communication resources and in the flow of information could not be redressed unless the developing countries acquired structures that were quantitatively and qualitatively adequate.

27. The concept of the development of communication systems must encompass the establishment of infrastructures, satellite links and information processing. There was a need for more coherent communication policies, for action-oriented research, for realistic and creative planning, for thoughtful training, for the development and strengthening of national and regional institutions in order to expand indigenous means of production, and for the production of equipment better suited to the requirements of developing countries. Innovative machinery was also necessary to improve exchanges of information and skills. However, such machinery should not be an end in itself, for it would not bring about the change needed by the developing countries. It was necessary, first and foremost, to define the policies and priorities of international co-operation in the field of communications, and an essential drawback in that endeavour was the shortage of resources available for the development of communications, as compared with the funds allotted to other sectors of development. In order to change the priorities at the international level, priorities must be clearly defined at the national level.

28. The discrepancy between statements on the importance of communications and the importance that field was accorded in reality created a major problem. Communication systems in developing countries might appear to have high priority, but a closer look often revealed that they received little financing or investment. Despite the widely recognized role of communications in national development and international understanding, neither legislators nor media managers seemed to have followed the guidelines of the policy-makers.

29. He expressed the hope that the UNESCO Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Development, which was scheduled for April 1980, would provide answers to those questions and would help to establish a new, more just and more effective information and communication order in which UNESCO would continue to play a central role. UNESCO appreciated the active co-operation of all the other agencies within the United Nations system, each of which, in carrying out its own mandate with its own assistance and expertise, must seek to take the United Nations system as a whole as an effective instrument responsive to the aspirations of the peoples of the world, in the best conditions possible for all nations and peoples, to the development of a new and better information and communication order.

30. Mr. DAHOVI (Italy), speaking as Rapporteur of the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, introduced the report of that Committee contained in document A/34/21. He drew attention to the fact that, because of a lack of conference facilities, the Committee had held only one continuous session, while the rest of its work had been performed in scattered meetings. The results of its activities as reported in document A/34/21 should be evaluated in that light.

31. In his opening statement, the Chairman of the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities had outlined the guidelines the Committee had followed in carrying out the task entrusted to it under General Assembly resolution 33/115 C. The full text of that statement was contained in annex I of the report. The Chairman's summary of the general debate held from 27 May to 1 June 1979 was contained in annex II of the report.

32. The mandate of the Ad Hoc Working Group, which had been set up because of the lack of conference facilities available to the Committee, was described in the resolution contained in paragraph 37 of the report. In compliance with its mandate, the Working Group had submitted a report to the Committee, which had taken note of that report and had included it, as annex III, in its report to the General Assembly.

33. As was apparent in annex III, the Working Group had made an extensive analysis of information activities conducted within the United Nations system. Its conclusions ranged from general recommendations to specific suggestions, some of which could be implemented immediately, while others would require more thorough consideration. The conclusions of the Working Group represented a far-reaching programme for the future work of the Committee, in the event that its current mandate was renewed by the General Assembly.

34. He emphasized that the Committee had sought to reach a consensus on all the issues before it, and that that effort had made it possible to achieve important results, notwithstanding the limited number of meetings it had held. The Committee had decided to recommend that the General Assembly should renew its mandate, as it had indicated in paragraph 48 of the report. He drew attention to an error contained in the last sentence of paragraph 48 of the English version of the report, which should be corrected to read: "In this connexion, some delegations mentioned that the mandate should be enlarged."

35. Mr. MESTIRI (Tunisia)*, speaking in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, observed that, as members of the Special Political Committee were aware, the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities had so far been unable to live up to all the expectations placed in it. Yet, in spite of the difficulties which it had encountered it had produced a report which opened the way for more detailed consideration of United Nations public information policies and activities. The work done by its Ad Hoc Working Group had at least permitted a preliminary consideration of that issue.

* The full text of this statement will be issued as a document.

(Mr. Mastiri, Tunisia)

36. As members would recall, it had not been easy to reach agreement on the composition of the Committee and on the selection of its 41 members. The usual difficulties inherent in such an exercise had been compounded by the eagerness of a large number of delegations to participate in the Committee's work, and it was only on 4 April 1979 that a final decision on its composition had been reached. The Committee's composition continued to be a subject of debate, however, for it had been suggested that its membership be increased to 54 or 61 or that it should be open-ended. He personally advocated full participation by all those delegations which were interested in the Committee's work and believed that they could make a useful contribution to it.

37. A second difficulty which had seriously impeded the Committee's functioning was the lack of the necessary meeting rooms and conference servicing facilities because of reconstruction work at Headquarters. The result was that it had been able to meet for only six days. In order to overcome that difficulty, several delegations had suggested that a number of small working groups should be set up to deal with the various problems entrusted to the Committee. Such groups would not have required large meeting rooms or interpretation services. When certain countries had opposed that suggestion, the Group of 77 in the Committee had introduced a draft resolution calling for the creation of two working groups to deal with the Committee's two principal tasks, namely to evaluate the policies and activities of the Department of Public Information and to review and evaluate the progress made in establishing a new world information order. A consensus on that draft resolution had proved impossible because of the categorical refusal of certain Western countries to acknowledge that the Committee had any part whatsoever to play in the establishment of a new world information order. Finally, as a compromise, it had been decided to establish a single working group consisting of 20 members. Unfortunately, that had not solved the problem and the Working Group had had to work under extremely difficult conditions, its non-English-speaking members being at a particular disadvantage. In addition, the issue of the interpretation of the Committee's mandate had had to be shelved, with the result that the problem of its competence with regard to the new world information order remained unresolved.

38. Those problems notwithstanding, the Ad Hoc Working Group had done significant work. The dedication of its Chairman, Mr. Alborno of Ecuador, in particular, had enabled the Committee to submit a number of important comments and recommendations on the functioning of the Department of Public Information. The question of the interpretation of the Committee's mandate, however, demanded an unequivocal decision on the part of the General Assembly.

39. Annex II of the report of the Committee contained in document A/34/21 presented a summary of the detailed and interesting general debate which had taken place in the Committee and reproduced the main ideas and concrete proposals resulting from that debate. The difficulties which he had mentioned had prevented the Committee from undertaking a full examination of the report of the Ad Hoc Working Group, which was reproduced in annex III and contained a number of useful

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comments and proposals. Although the Ad Hoc Working Group was still in the first stages of its work, it had managed to give a precise idea of how the Department of Public Information functioned, which should enable the Committee to make an in-depth review of the Department's role and of the principles which had governed its functioning since the establishment of the United Nations. Those principles were analysed in his own opening statement to the Committee's organizational session, which was reproduced in annex I to the report.

40. In his view, the main problem was still one of adapting the Department to a new world, as reflected in a transformed United Nations. No one could claim that the United Nations had the same information needs and functions in 1975 as in 1945. While the basic principle governing United Nations information activities had not changed since 1946, several of the Department's methods must be revised.

41. The Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had drawn attention to the problem of the balance between "coverage" activities and "promotional" activities, particularly in the economic and social sphere. That was clearly a major problem, especially since coverage, without a minimum of explanation, might not be accepted, as the media and correspondents of developed countries obviously found it difficult to grasp what the third world, and hence the United Nations, was trying to say, and the rich minority of the world's population obviously found it difficult to grasp the basic demands and aspirations of the third world as translated by the United Nations.

42. The Western media were clearly disenchanted with the United Nations. What they had originally perceived as an asset in the East-West rivalry, they now saw as a handicap in the new North-South schism which had followed the accession of third world countries to independence and sovereignty. That misconception was due to a lack of understanding of the new world situation on the part of press and media, which were motivated primarily by commercial considerations. The Department of Public Information was in an excellent position to help media correspondents to a better understanding of current problems. The commercial approach to information must be corrected if information was to be restored to its proper place, that of a social necessity. The search for a more just and balanced world information and communications order must be seen in that context.

43. Document A/SPC/33/L.5 had already demonstrated the need for a new world information order and had made specific practical proposals as to how such an order might be established. It did not, of course, claim to solve the immense problems involved in that task, which would first require a change in the mental attitudes and perceptions of all concerned. As could be seen from the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/34/149), UNESCO was already doing impressive and valuable work in that area and there was no question of duplicating its work within the United Nations. The latter's task should simply be to analyse all the relevant documentation produced so that the General Assembly could give it the political dimension vital to its success.

44. The part to be played by the United Nations in establishing a new world information order would not limit the activities of UNEP or of any other

(Mr. Nestiri, Tunisia)

international organization which was making its contribution to that process. Because of its central position within the United Nations system, the General Assembly could provide the necessary impetus, facilitate the necessary co-ordination among specialized agencies and harmonize the efforts being made in the field of information with those being made in other areas, in particular with the movement to establish the new international economic order. The new world information order was motivated by the same concerns as the New International Economic Order and was indeed a corollary of that objective.

45. Those who sought to establish a more just and hence more fraternal world order in any sphere could not afford to dwell on procedural considerations, and there should be no difficulty in mobilizing all energies in favour of a new information order. In that tremendous undertaking, no contribution would be superfluous, provided that there was no duplication and everyone worked towards the same goal. Accordingly he suggested that the General Assembly, in a resolution extending the mandate of the Committee, should recognize the following principles: (1) the need for all the specialized agencies concerned and other organizations to participate in the work to establish a new information order; (2) UNESCO's central role in the field of information and communication; (3) the co-ordinating role which the United Nations could play, for instance by transmitting to the General Assembly periodic reports from all the specialized agencies concerned; (4) the need to harmonize technical assistance to developing countries in the area of mass communications and communications technology; (5) the need to work towards the objectives of a free and balanced flow of information and economic development and social progress.

46. Those basic principles could provide a framework for co-operation in the field of information among all the organs of the United Nations system, and could help to define the part to be played by the United Nations in the Intergovernmental Conference to be organized by UNESCO in 1980 and in the machinery created by that Conference.

47. He believed that the Committee could prove to be a valuable tool for the General Assembly if the latter entrusted it with the tasks which he had mentioned and gave it a clear and unambiguous mandate. The developing countries, for their part, working within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77, would try to present for action by the Special Political Committee draft resolutions which clarified the Committee's tasks and could be adopted by consensus, thereby enabling the General Assembly and the Committee to play a positive role in the field of information. If the price of consensus was ambiguity, however, he would prefer that such resolutions were adopted by a majority and left no doubt about the Committee's mandate. He hoped that delegations would do all they could to achieve a consensus, in the true spirit of the United Nations.

48. Mrs. SCHADE (German Democratic Republic) observed that information was playing an increasingly important role in the lives of people the world over. In the international arena, questions relating to information had ceased to be the exclusive domain of specialists and were increasingly the subject of diplomatic forums. For the first time, a special chapter on co-operation in the field of

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information among States with different social systems had been included in the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference. The main question was, how could the immense potential of the mass media be devoted to the cause of peace, mutual understanding and national independence, rather than to sowing the seeds of discord among countries and peoples? The United Nations must do all it could to prevent the mass media from fomenting tension and engaging in propaganda against other countries and races.

49. At the opening of a recent international conference on the role of the mass media, held in Stockholm under UNESCO auspices, Mr. Sean MacBride had pointed to the need for objective and true information to be published on the arms race and on efforts to promote disarmament in order to combat the cold war propaganda currently being published in the West, where "statistical data" of a strategic and military nature were being used in a campaign to spur the development of weapons of mass destruction. At the current session of the General Assembly, the Foreign Minister of her country had also emphasized that "the public advocacy by certain mass media of war, hatred among peoples and the arms race runs counter to the strengthening of international security". As early as 1947, the General Assembly had adopted a resolution on measures to be taken against propaganda and incitement to a new war, yet such propaganda was still being published, 30 years later, in a number of countries. War propaganda was strictly prohibited in the socialist countries; in her own country it was prohibited by the Constitution. It might be useful if the Secretariat were to provide information as to what publicity was being given throughout the world to arms limitation efforts.

50. Her delegation attached great importance to the work of the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, and believed that such policies and activities were governed by Article 1 of the Charter and by subsequent United Nations resolutions and decisions in the field of information. A main feature of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group had been that senior staff members of the Department of Public Information and other information units had been invited to take part in a dialogue on ways of improving United Nations public information activities. The idea that United Nations information executives should report on how they had fulfilled their mandate was new and useful. Among the recommendations arising out of that dialogue and reproduced in annex III to the Committee's report, particular attention should be given to recommendations 2, 5 and 6 on page 29. Her delegation believed that the Working Group had done valuable work and that its recommendations provided a good starting point from which to proceed in determining how United Nations information activities should be conducted. Her delegation was therefore in favour of extending the Committee's mandate.

51. Like the report of the Committee, the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities (A/34/574) reflected the comprehensive work done by the Secretariat's public information sector and by relevant United Nations bodies. The absence of political balance and objectivity

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in public information activities, inaccuracy, which reduced the effectiveness of information prepared by the Department of Public Information and the waste of funds when the wrong approach produced results that were rejected by Member States were among the chief problems confronting DPI.

52. Her delegation noted with interest the contents of documents A/34/148 and 149. The establishment of national information systems in the developing countries, an endeavour which was linked to the struggle against imperialism in the field of information and colonialism in the cultural and intellectual spheres, was a significant factor in efforts to promote political and economic development. Her delegation also viewed with interest the passages on co-operation in the field of information and communications contained in the Final Document of the Conference of Non-Aligned Countries held in Havana. The concern of developing countries with regard to information was also supported by article VI of the UNESCO Declaration on the Mass Media.

53. The Declaration adopted at the tenth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament included the recommendation that resources released as a result of disarmament should be devoted to the economic and social development of all nations. In that connexion, her delegation believed that the resources freed by disarmament could be used to develop national communications systems in the developing countries.

54. The socialist countries had for many years been promoting the development of national information systems in the developing countries by means of exchanges of experience about the role of the mass media in social development and the formulation of communication policies serving the national interest. They provided advanced training for media personnel from developing countries, and technical assistance in establishing national media systems. Thus, the Journalists' Union of her own country co-operated with journalists' unions, groups of journalists from the liberation movements and ministries of information in more than 30 developing countries. In its 16 years of existence, the School of Solidarity sponsored by the Journalists' Union had taught the theory and practice of journalism to more than 500 journalists from 39 countries. The Journalists' Union offered UNESCO two scholarships at the School on a regular basis and had also organized courses abroad. It also helped to establish national training institutions in African and Arab countries. Such efforts illustrated her country's desire to support the developing countries in their struggle to end their dependence on the imperialist countries and their information trusts.

55. Mr. MUBAREZ (Yemen), speaking on a point of order, suggested that the statements just made by the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO and the representative of Tunisia should be reproduced in extenso as official documents of the Special Political Committee.

56. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee decided to endorse the suggestion made by the representative of Yemen.

57. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.