



**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 26th MEETING**

**Chairman: Mr. AL-KAWARI (Qatar)**

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 78: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued) (A/42/21)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/494)

(c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued) (A/42/571)

1. Mr. TLALAJOF (Lesotho) pointed out how important it was for all countries to co-operate in the establishment of a new world information and communication order and expressed his support for the efforts of the United Nations to implement the recommendations made by the Committee on Information in its report (A/42/21).

2. Regarding the plan to restructure the Department of Public Information (DPI) outlined by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, Lesotho was ready to co-operate to the extent that the restructuring did not affect radio broadcasts in the various languages spoken in South Africa, which had been designed to disseminate information on apartheid and encourage the people of that region. Those broadcasts had been initiated by virtue of several General Assembly resolutions, and the General Assembly had also, in resolution 41/68 of 3 December 1986, expressly defined DPI's mandate. However, the future of those broadcasts had not been indicated clearly in either the statement of the Under-Secretary-General or in document ST/SGB/Organization/DPI of 2 November 1987. A restructuring plan along the lines of the latter document would be contrary to the General Assembly resolutions; he therefore hoped that the document had not been given final approval and asked the Committee to take a close look at it.

3. Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana) said that the report of the Committee on Information contained a comprehensive account of the issues it had considered but failed to reflect the serious concerns and the divergence of views of its members regarding the formulation of a United Nations public information policy.

4. The developing countries had made it abundantly clear that there was an urgent need to establish a new information order allowing them effective participation on an equal footing with other nations in political, economic, social and cultural life, as well as a need to democratize and reinforce multilateralism in international affairs. Consequently, at the latest meeting of the Committee on Information, the Group of 77 had voted in favour of such change. The Western developed countries had either abstained or voted against it, maintaining their traditional position that the information order could not be arbitrarily altered and seeking, perhaps, to perpetuate their control of the information system. That dichotomy between the developed and the developing world had served to deter the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and all other United Nations agencies dealing with information from making any progress towards the creation of a new system. The problem had been compounded by the

(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

financial crisis, which offered the Committee on Information a pretext for not carrying out its mandate to co-operate in the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

5. It appeared, moreover, that DPI interpreted its mandate very narrowly, seeing itself as responsible merely for publicizing the United Nations, without thought for its larger mandate to contribute to a new world information and communication order. DPI must therefore pay due attention to recommendations 1 and 7 in paragraph 21 of the report of the Committee on Information if it was to play its appointed role in the field of information, in accordance with the principles and guidelines laid down by the General Assembly. Those principles and guidelines should be the criteria for the restructuring programme undertaken by DPI to make maximum use of its resources in the performance of its functions. Furthermore, DPI should, by means of constant consultation, ensure that its restructuring did not entail the elimination of programmes considered important by Member States.

6. As to recommendation 35 of the Committee on Information, which dealt, inter alia, with the Caribbean Unit, his delegation wondered if there was any real intention of pursuing the plan to strengthen that Unit, which had first been formulated four years earlier. If, as the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had herself stated, the objective of the United Nations in the area of communications should not change year after year, the Caribbean project, which had the blessing of the General Assembly, should not be further deferred and an effort should be made to satisfy the needs of the region.

7. He called attention to the information and communication policy on issues like apartheid, Namibia and Palestine, and the reluctance of some Member States to support activities in that field. He urged all relevant United Nations bodies to make the question a matter of priority because, in helping the cause of the oppressed, they might at the same time be justifying their own existence.

8. It was important for the Special Political Committee and the General Assembly to provide direction and pertinent guidelines to the agencies involved in information and communication. For the time being, Guyana would refrain from taking a position in the controversy over the policy being followed by DPI, although it noted that such controversy would harm any work being done in the field of information, because internal dialogue and agreement were pre-conditions for the effectiveness of external activities.

9. Measures for assisting a few developing countries to improve their information and communication infrastructures should not be adopted without bearing in mind the aspirations embodied in General Assembly resolution 34/182, which Guyana once again reaffirmed.

10. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that communication and information, with their capacity to influence the reactions and behaviour of modern peoples and societies, had an essential role to play in achieving the international goals of peace, development and solidarity among nations. However, despite the numerous calls for a new and

(Mr. Ka, Senegal)

better-balanced world information order, the communications media continued to reflect the current distribution of economic power. While differences between the North and South were increasing, the owners of the communications media continued to control the flow of information and to determine its content.

11. His delegation, which had taken note of the statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information concerning the restructuring of the Department of Public Information (DPI), hoped that, with the will of all combined, the Department could be revitalized despite the gravity of the crisis. His delegation was interested in seeing the developing countries fairly represented, on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, among the senior staff of the Department, and stressed that, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter, the Department should concern itself especially with questions relating to international peace and security, decolonization, Palestine, apartheid and the critical economic situation in Africa.

12. His delegation asked the Department to increase and diversify its co-operation and exchanges with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and with the developing countries' national press agencies, and to help make communications and news dissemination technology available to them.

13. New special contributions to the International Programme for the Development of Communication must be encouraged in order to accelerate the implementation of certain projects at the regional, national and international levels. He reiterated his Government's support for the efforts to be undertaken by the new Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to increase that organization's prestige.

14. The developing countries had remained on the margin of the technological revolution in the sphere of communications, and he was confident that the countries which possessed those technologies would understand that the adoption of concrete measures of assistance and training in that field would benefit both the developed and the developing countries. Freedom of information formed part of the common heritage of mankind, and must be achieved within the framework of a new approach which would guarantee access to communication for all.

15. Mr. NAHES (Brazil) said that his delegation was concerned that the results achieved at the forty-first session of the General Assembly had not been maintained in the 1987 substantive session of the Committee on Information. However, the recommendations contained in the Committee's report should open up that possibility, since they were basically the same as those contained in General Assembly resolution 41/68 A.

16. The possibility of consensus must be viewed from a cost/benefit perspective. The Group of 77 must not relinquish some basic principles which had always guided it, such as the search for a new world information and communication order; the preservation of the Committee's mandate; the impartial, wide and diversified dissemination of news, including political news; the freedom and responsibility of

(Mr. Nahes, Brazil)

seeking and imparting information; the defence of pluralism of information sources; the State's restricted participation; access by developing countries to information technology and the legitimate right of those countries to protect their information industries. The search for a new world information and communication order still formed the conceptual framework for examining and deciding upon concrete proposals and activities aimed at narrowing the gap between developed and developing countries in that field.

17. Since 20 August 1987, the Department of Public Information had been selecting news and sending it to the Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro, where it was translated into Portuguese. The Brazilian Radio Broadcasting Network (Radiobras) was broadcasting it daily, free of charge, to 60 million listeners. The material was also provided to the Brazilian News Enterprise and to 23 newspapers in cities with a population of under one million. His delegation would like to see that experience mentioned in the next report on the subject.

18. Despite the achievements of the Rio de Janeiro Information Centre and the Latin American/Iberian Unit of the United Nations Radio Service, the potential for co-operation in that field had been under-explored. His delegation believed that co-operation with the United Nations could be further enhanced by the appointment of a Portuguese-speaking producer, which could benefit not only Brazil but also 160 million people in the seven Portuguese-speaking countries of the world. His delegation wished to hear from the Under-Secretary-General on that issue, taking into account the contents of page 35 of the plan to revitalize DPI and paragraph 13 of her opening statement before the Special Political Committee.

19. Concerning the restructuring of DPI, his delegation shared some of the concerns expressed by the representative of Mexico. Nevertheless, it basically agreed with some of the recommendations contained in paragraphs 24 to 30 of document A/42/16 (Part II).

20. Mr. MOHAMED (Trinidad and Tobago) said that action at the international level must not only take into account but should also interact with the domestic situation in each country. The developing countries were going through a period of transition and reconstruction; their political, social and economic institutions were in the process of continuous change and were groping towards their cultural identity. In short, developing countries were experiencing the stresses and strains of adjustment to new social and economic realities. Owing to the crucial role of information in the development process, it was essential to structure the new world order and to develop the appropriate mechanisms towards that end.

21. The world was seen through the prism of Western values, since the developing countries were consumers of information produced by the developed countries of the West. There was a need to redress that imbalance, and DPI had an important role to play in that regard. The co-operation between DPI, the Eco-Pool and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries should be strengthened. Training programmes for young journalists and broadcasters should be accelerated, and the information capacity of the developing countries should be strengthened. In addition,

(Mr. Mohamed, Trinidad and Tobago)

international resources should be mobilized to strengthen the technical and financial base of the developing countries' information and communication systems.

22. Owing to the financial constraints facing the United Nations, in particular the drastic reductions in the budget of DPI, it was obvious that any reorganization or restructuring could affect the functions of the Department. In his delegation's view, the restructuring should be carried out with the active collaboration of the developing countries. To that end, the views of the developing countries, as expressed in the Committee on Information and the Special Political Committee, should be duly considered; the representation of Member States in DPI should be geographically balanced; in the review of the proposed structure of DPI, the views expressed by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination should receive due attention; the information centres should be retained in order to mobilize world public opinion; the programmes mandated by General Assembly resolutions should be implemented; and the resources of non-governmental organizations should be utilized to assist in the dissemination of information.

23. Mr. EL-KHATIB (Morocco) said that the efforts of the United Nations in recent years to promote the establishment of a new world information and communication order had demonstrated the international community's awareness of the importance of the problems in that sphere. The concentration of communications technology and media in the hands of a small number of information networks jeopardized the establishment of a balanced flow of information exchange between the developed countries and the developing countries.

24. The process of establishing the new world information and communication order was proceeding irreversibly, although there were still some questions regarding its nature and legal status. The developed countries, which possessed technology and knowledge, should share them with the developing countries. The latter should, in turn, assume responsibility for training and for research costs. That was the only way to bring about interdependence between the North and the South. It should be noted that the news exchanges sponsored by the non-aligned countries tended, by establishing South-South co-operation, to reduce the imbalance that characterized information distribution and communication models thereby making it possible to present a more realistic image of the third world from a new point of view.

25. DPI should undertake efforts in the area of education in order to imbue future generations with the ideals of the United Nations, especially regarding development, decolonization, disarmament and the elimination of racism and apartheid. Future generations would thus be able properly to appreciate interdependence and respect for the values of others. DPI should play a greater role in the World Disarmament Campaign by effectively raising States' awareness of the need to curb the arms race.

26. UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication should aid in the establishment of national information systems in the developing countries, which in his delegation's view, would represent a valuable contribution to those countries' efforts to establish their own information structures. The

(Mr. El-Khatib, Morocco)

policy of intellectual independence of Development Forum should also be maintained, so that it could continue to publish accurate and objective information on the numerous difficulties confronting the third world countries in their struggle for development.

27. Under the pretext of protecting their populations from any unhealthy influences, numerous Governments exercised control over information. His delegation considered that the immense possibilities which communication offered made it a powerful tool for promoting the democratization of society. Morocco had a sizeable written press which encompassed all shades of political opinion in the country, and the Moroccan Government espoused a tolerant system which guaranteed all citizens freedom of opinion and expression under the Constitution. Only when a consensus had been reached with the participation of all could information play its true role of bringing peoples closer together and helping them to live in peace, with mutual respect and without the desire to dominate in any way nor to impose any ideology.

28. Mr. KUNSTADTER (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation had listened with great puzzlement to the statement the representative of Viet Nam had made at the Committee's 25th meeting, using as his own a vocabulary clearly coined by others and referring, in particular, to Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and Radio Marti. It was surprising to learn that the broadcasts of the latter were powerful enough to reach Viet Nam. The representative of Viet Nam had also spoken of imperialist propaganda centres, perhaps in reference to his own country's ambitions in South-East Asia, ambitions which, since 1979, had been condemned by a growing majority of delegations to the General Assembly.

29. The Committee's patience had also been tried by the preposterous utterances of the representative of a régime which claimed to be in control of Kabul and other Afghan cities, when in fact that régime was receiving considerable foreign military and logistic aid. The remarks in question would not have merited a reply had they not obscured the real and tragic situation in Afghanistan. He recalled that in 1987 the draft resolution on Afghanistan had received 123 votes in favour.

30. Mr. JAWSHAN (Afghanistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that it was not surprising that his statement at the Committee's 25th meeting had not been to the liking of the United States representative, although that statement has disclosed only some of the subversive and hostile activities conducted by the CIA against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan since the April revolution. Two thousand schools, 131 hospitals, 350 bridges, 224 mosques and holy places and 258 production units had been destroyed by agents of the CIA, resulting in the killing of many innocent civilians, including women, children and the elderly. The main aim of the United States in carrying out such acts was to undermine Afghanistan's national reconciliation policy, which was intended to restore peace and put an end to bloodshed.

(Mr. Jawshan, Afghanistan)

31. The United States, through its gigantic propaganda machine, tried to justify its subversive activities under the pretext of helping those who could not help themselves. But there was no justification for the killing, no matter what name the United States gave to it.

32. Mr. TRUONG TREU DUONG (Viet Nam), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation's puzzlement was compounded by the fact that the representative of the United States had found it necessary to exercise his right of reply with regard to Viet Nam's statement at the Committee's 25th meeting, in which the United States had not been mentioned by name. The United States representative had asked if Radio Martí was powerful enough to reach Viet Nam. He, in turn, ventured to ask whether in the past Viet Nam had been powerful enough to fight the United States. He recalled that the United States had launched a war against Viet Nam in which it had utilized every kind of weapon, except nuclear weapons.

33. His delegation had already refuted at length the United States remarks regarding Viet Nam's ambitions in South-East Asia, and would therefore not do so again; nevertheless, his delegation invited the United States representative to examine the relevant documents which were available in the Vietnamese Mission.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.