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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-KAWARI (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 76: INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE
(continued) (A/SPC/42/L.18 and Corr.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to take a decision on draft resolution A/SPC/42/L.18 and Corr.1.
2. Draft resolution A/SPC/42/L.18 and Corr.1 was adopted without a vote.
3. Mr. MARIN-BOSCH (Mexico) said he wished to make some remarks following the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus.
4. In his delegation's view, the work of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space during the current year had been particularly fruitless. The proposals submitted by several delegations with a view to giving the Committee new impetus and strengthening the role of the United Nations had been dismissed out of hand. The draft resolution just adopted was nothing but a carbon copy of General Assembly resolution 41/64 adopted at the previous session and his delegation wondered, under the circumstances, why the Working Group had thought it necessary to meet four times.
5. The Outer Space Committee was admittedly not the only body encountering such difficulties. They affected almost all international organizations and had their origin in the crisis of multilateralism, the exacerbation of the world economic situation and the unbridled arms race. But it was wrong to remain passive, waiting for things to improve. His delegation could not help but be concerned at the indifference shown with regard to the draft resolution. The Special Political Committee had done nothing more than follow a ritual which was repeated every year. It had accepted silence raised to the level of policy and had allowed form to win out over substance. Some had argued that it was a matter of "saving time", but should that become an end in itself, even as the noble ideals of the Organization were allowed to erode? By refusing to clearly express its will, the majority cleared the way for those who would like to see the United Nations abandon the lofty principles which had inspired its creation.
6. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of item 76.

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

7. Mr. KARINEN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, reaffirmed that freedom of thought, opinion and expression was an integral part of human rights. The Nordic countries had joined the consensus in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on the question of a new world information and communication order, seen as a continuous and evolving process based on the free circulation and wider dissemination of information. They were pleased that after years of ideological and political confrontation a spirit of co-operation had emerged, and hoped that further improvements on the recommendations adopted by the Committee on Information would lead to a consensus.

8. The gap which existed in the area of communication and information between many of the developing countries and countries in the East and West continued to widen, not only as a result of lack of money, but also owing to lack of infrastructure and education. For that reason, while emphasizing that the activities of the United Nations should not overlap those of UNESCO, nor those of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), the Nordic countries regretted that some of the scheduled training programmes had not been carried out as planned.

9. The Nordic countries supported the efforts undertaken by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to streamline the activities of the Department of Public Information. It was particularly important to overcome financial constraints and to concentrate efforts in the most effective way to obtain concrete results. In order to cope with the challenges of the modern world, the Department must have access to new technology. As their contribution to that end, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland had financed a special electronic information network in the Division for Economic and Social Information. The Department's efforts in the area of audio-visual work should also be intensified. The Nordic countries attached great importance to the publication of Development Forum, which should be financed under the United Nations regular budget. Likewise, given the important role played by non-governmental organizations in the dissemination of information, it would be desirable to allocate funds under the regular budget for the operation of the Non-Governmental Liaison Services in New York and Geneva. The Nordic countries supported the measures taken by the Secretary-General with regard to the United Nations information centres.

10. Co-operation between the Department and UNESCO should be strengthened. The Nordic countries fully supported IPDC and considered that the Special Account, in particular, was indispensable for the execution of projects aimed at achieving practical results.

11. Mr. BARQUERO (Nicaragua) said that, because of technological advances, information had become an important element of international relations. The international community could therefore no longer tolerate the anarchy that prevailed in the field of information and communications. It was imperative to strive for the establishment of the new world information and communication order, which would make it possible to abolish the monopoly enjoyed by certain countries and to put the latest technology within the reach of the underdeveloped countries. Information must be objective and faithful to reality. The mass media should, in

(Mr. Barquero, Nicaragua)

particular, disseminate more widely information on efforts to promote disarmament, decolonization and peace and on activities to foster social, cultural and economic development. Information should help to strengthen friendship between peoples, promote the new international economic order and enhance respect for international law.

12. Those goals were far from being attained. Many industrialized countries continued to monopolize and manipulate information, using it as an ideological weapon, an instrument of colonization, and a means of fomenting disorder in other countries and of slandering peoples. Governments and liberation movements which cherished their independence and their sovereignty. How, for example, was it possible to justify the broadcasts of Radio Martí, directed against Nicaragua, or other broadcasts aimed solely at propagating hate? That was, indeed, a new manifestation of state terrorism.

13. Consequently, it was not surprising that questions of information were the subject of discussions in several international forums. Thus, the Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries had met in Harare in September 1987 to discuss exclusively the new world information and communication order. That subject had also been discussed in January 1987 at the Fifth Islamic Summit Conference, held in Kuwait.

14. His delegation considered that the United Nations had a crucial role to play in co-ordinating activities to promote the new world information and communication order. That was why it welcomed the fact that the Committee on Information had reiterated its willingness to co-operate more closely with the Department of Public Information. The United Nations system must furnish assistance to the developing countries in such a way that they were able to establish their own information and communication policies. To that end, UNESCO should be given adequate support and efforts made to improve means of training and interregional communication systems and to expand co-operation between United Nations bodies and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, particularly the News Agencies Pool of those countries.

15. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said that, although it was not a member of the Committee on Information, Austria had participated since 1986 in its meetings as an observer. It had witnessed a renewed sense of flexibility, co-operation and understanding on the part of many delegations which had made it possible to adopt, at the previous session, General Assembly resolution 41/68 A. That had engendered hope for a return to consensus. That hope, however, had so far not been fulfilled.

16. His delegation had said many times that freedom of thought, opinion and expression and the free flow of ideas and information were basic human rights. Freedom of information meant, inter alia, the right to have access to information from a variety of sources.

(Mr. Freudenschuss, Austria)

17. Austria was concerned at the imbalances in resources pertaining to communications which operated to the detriment of the developing countries. It considered that efforts to promote a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, should be aimed at facilitating the international flow of information in order to correct those imbalances as far as possible. The United Nations system had an important role to play in that regard. That held true not only for the Department of Public Information but also for UNESCO, whose International Programme for the Development of Communication could serve as a co-ordinating mechanism for assessing needs and resources and establishing priorities.

18. As for the Department of Public Information, his delegation could not but commend the efforts under way to rationalize its functioning. The Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had provided a lucid picture of the deplorable effects the current crisis in the United Nations had had on the Department's activities. In order to cope with that situation, she had not only created a conceptual framework but had already started to implement some of the measures required. His delegation welcomed the Under-Secretary-General's firm determination and pledged her its unreserved support.

19. Mr. ISHIDA (Japan) said that the freedom of information, the right to expression and the free access to information were fundamental human rights and important elements in social progress and development.

20. His delegation fully understood the desire of the developing countries to correct existing imbalances so as to ensure a free and balanced dissemination of information, especially information concerning them.

21. He noted with regret that the impasse in the debate on a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, had prevented progress from being made in that field. Rather than engage in sterile debate on the definition of the new order, it would be better to strengthen co-operation between developing and developed countries and expand the activities of the Department of Public Information and other United Nations organs. For that reason, Japan extended financial and technical co-operation to such efforts as UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication and the programmes of UNDP aimed at enhancing the information and communication infrastructures of developing countries.

22. His delegation appreciated the efforts of the Department to publicize the important role of the United Nations in maintaining peace and security and promoting the well-being of mankind. He noted that the Department had reached an agreement with NHK, the Japan Broadcasting Corporation, to provide film clips for inclusion in its weekly television programmes in Japan. Much remained to be done, however. In the light of the expectations which people around the world had of the United Nations, his delegation hoped that the Department would make every possible effort to publicize the activities and achievements of the Organization.

(Mr. Ishida, Japan)

23. With regard to information activities concerning the political questions discussed in the United Nations, his delegation believed that they must be balanced and impartial, reflecting the range of views and interests expressed by the different countries. The Department should also focus more attention on information about the economic and social development of developing countries.

24. Turning to the restructuring of the Department, he said that Japan appreciated in principle the Department's ongoing efforts to streamline its work and revitalize its structure. On the other hand, a number of points regarding the new structure and its financial implications needed to be clarified. The restructuring should not result in an expansion of the administrative structure through, for example, the creation of additional senior posts, which would be contrary to the principles contained in the recommendations of the Group of 18 and in General Assembly resolution 41/213.

25. He hoped that a spirit of compromise and co-operation would prevail and that the Committee would be able to reach satisfactory agreement on questions relating to information.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.