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at 3 p.m.

New York

## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. FIGUEROA (Argentina)

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AGENDA ITEM 53: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 53: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/SPC/34/L.16/Rev.1, A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1 and A/SPC/34/L.22)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to draft resolutions A/SPC/34/L.16/Rev.1 and A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1. The first draft has no financial implications, while those relating to the second were indicated in document A/SPC/34/L.22. If there was no request for a vote on the draft resolutions, he would take it that the Committee adopted them by consensus.

2. It was so decided.

3. Mr. McGRADY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the nine member States of the European Economic Community, said that those countries had joined in the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1 with reservations. Some of the proposals contained in the draft might have the effect of duplicating the work of UNESCO. Furthermore, there did not appear to be a proper balance in the mandate given to the Committee on Information, whose primary function should be to review the work of the Department of Public Information and make recommendations in that regard. In addition, some of the proposals contained in the resolution either had potentially serious financial implications or did not appear to have been adequately considered. The nine countries appreciated, however, the spirit of dialogue in which the resolution had been prepared and had in some respects been modified.

4. Mr. PRENDERGAST (United Kingdom) said that he welcomed the consensus reached on the two draft resolutions. Nevertheless, his delegation had serious reservations regarding the second draft (A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1). The Government of the United Kingdom was deeply committed to the free flow of information and to freedom for all information media, and it was suspicious of anything which might imply government control of those freedoms.

5. The primary role of the United Nations Committee on Information should be the analysis and evaluation of the activities of the United Nations in the field of information, particularly those of the Department of Public Information. Neither the Department nor the Committee should involve itself in detailed consideration of a new world information and communication order. To do so would duplicate the activities of UNESCO and waste scarce resources.

6. His delegation was also unable to support the open-ended call for expenditure on broadcasting activities implied by some of the proposals in part II of the draft resolution. The financial implications of those proposals for the next biennium might be modest, but in the longer term they were clearly considerable. The recommendations in paragraph 22 of the resolution had not been considered in either the United Nations Committee on Information or the Ad Hoc Working Group. The General Assembly should not adopt hasty and ill-prepared measures.

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(Mr. Prendergast, United Kingdom)

7. His delegation hoped that the constructive work carried out in the drafting group and the Ad Hoc Working Group, which had marked the beginning of real discussion of the underlying issues, would set a precedent for the work of the Committee on Information itself in 1980.

8. Mr. BLOMBERG (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries - Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland - said that their delegations had joined in the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1 because they were convinced that effective information and communications were important prerequisites for the United Nations in carrying out its mandate. Those countries had accepted the enlargement of the mandate of the Committee on Information as a recognition of the need to strengthen the information and communication infrastructure of developing countries in order to facilitate the free circulation of information among them and to other parts of the world. That was how they interpreted the concept of a new world information and communication order as defined in operative paragraph 2 (c) of the draft resolution.

9. It was the understanding of the Nordic delegations that there was nothing in the draft that would justify interference with freedom of information and that the broadening of the mandate of the Committee on Information would not duplicate the work of UNESCO with regard to the creation of better conditions for the functioning of mass communications media in developing countries. They also wished to stress the important role of the International Telecommunication Union, which should be given the opportunity to participate actively in the work of the United Nations since the development of a physical infrastructure was a precondition for improving the situation of the developing countries in that field. He regretted that that idea had not found expression in the draft resolution. On the other hand, he hoped it would be recognized that non-governmental organizations could make an important contribution to improving the dissemination of information about the United Nations and its activities and objectives.

10. The delegations of the Nordic countries had reservations regarding the second preambular paragraph. They wished to recall that, when they had ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, they had expressed reservations with regard to article 20, paragraph 1. They also had reservations concerning paragraph 22 (vi) of the draft resolution. The Governments of the Nordic countries had no authority in the matter, which fell within the competence of the broadcasting companies in those countries. The implementation of some of the paragraphs, including paragraph 11, would require additional funding. The delegations of the Nordic countries presumed that that question would be discussed in the competent bodies dealing with the United Nations budget, and they reserved the right to revert to the matter at the proper time.

11. Mr. KILIC (Turkey) welcomed the spirit of conciliation and co-operation demonstrated in the drafting group, which had made it possible to improve the original text and to eliminate most of his delegation's objections. It was gratifying to see that there was a consensus on the need to establish a new world information and communication order as well as recognition of the pivotal role in that process of the United Nations Public Information system. He hoped that there would also be complete agreement on the primary role of UNESCO in the overall field of information and mass communications. It was his delegation's

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(Mr. Kilic, Turkey)

understanding that the Committee on Information would not encroach on UNESCO's sphere of competence.

12. In Turkey, freedom of information and expression had been firmly established by the Constitution and was one of the bases of the democratic system. Therefore, any new information order that would encroach on those freedoms would be completely abhorrent to his country. Recent developments pointed to the shortcomings of the present information and communication order. Peoples throughout the world were poorly informed, and erroneous information could provoke violent reactions. There was also the danger of distortions and stereotypes and the perpetuation of prejudices. However, responsibility for that situation did not rest exclusively with one of the parties. Turkey, which had often been the victim of abuses in the mass communication media, believed that they could be ended only by a free and responsible press and not by government edicts and controls. An awareness of such abuses and a general acceptance of the need to establish a new order to prevent them represented in themselves important progress.

13. With regard to the financial implications of the draft resolution, the report of the Secretariat showed that they would be minimal and could be limited by shifting priorities and reallocating resources within the Department of Public Information.

14. Mr. BRAINARD (United States of America) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus on draft resolutions A/SPC/34/L.16/Rev.1 and A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1. With respect to the first of those drafts, his delegation's action should not be interpreted as prejudging the position of the United States with regard to a voluntary fund or as a commitment to contribute to such a fund.

15. With regard to the second draft, he wished to underscore the importance which the United States attached to the spirit of co-operation demonstrated in the consideration of the question and was gratified that the draft took cognizance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In paragraph 2 (c), it was clearly stated that a new world information and communication order must be based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information. The free circulation of ideas and freedom to disseminate and receive information were of fundamental importance and belonged by right to all mankind. He was also gratified that the Committee would continue to give priority to the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities, an area in which improvements had been made but in which much remained to be done.

16. His delegation had reservations with regard to the role of the Department of Public Information and other United Nations bodies in promoting the establishment of new orders that required significant changes in international and national structures, as was the case with the new international economic order and the new world information and communication order. United Nations publications and media services should give an objective picture of economic and communication developments and promote understanding and co-operation between the developing and the industrialized countries.

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(Mr. Brainard, United States)

17. His delegation was very concerned about the financial implications of portions of the draft resolution and about the lack of adequate information on those implications during the negotiating process. It reserved its position with respect to those portions until more information was made available by the Secretariat to the Fifth Committee.

18. Mr. WILDER (Canada) regretted that the Committee had adopted draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1. Had there been a vote on the draft, Canada would have abstained, since questions relating to information fell within the mandate of UNESCO. The draft resolution, if adopted by the General Assembly, could only inject confusion into the respective primary responsibilities of the Assembly and UNESCO. It was inopportune for the General Assembly to decide on the matter in that way. It would be better to await the publication of the final report of the McBride Commission and its consideration at the twenty-first General Conference of UNESCO, since that Commission had been established to consider the whole range of such questions, including those touched upon in the draft resolution.

19. Mrs. LANGERMANN (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the exchange of views which had made agreements possible on the texts just adopted had been useful. It had allowed a consensus to emerge. Yet her delegation had serious reservations on some points of draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1.

20. Much as she understood the developing countries justified aspirations to overcome the existing imbalance and to fully participate in a world-wide exchange of information, the vital importance of freedom of information, unimpaired by State control of biased prerogatives, should not be diminished. The Federal Republic of Germany would not influence the decisions of information media on what or how they were to report.

21. UNESCO should maintain its primary role within the United Nations system whenever information policies were involved. The tendency to focus United Nations information policies on the implementation of the new international economic order, as expressed in some paragraphs of the draft resolution, did not correspond to her understanding of an impartial and free information strategy.

22. Mr. BROOK (Australia) said that his delegation had joined the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1. Obviously, as with any compromise solution, the final text did not entirely satisfy most members. However, his delegation was particularly pleased that in paragraph 2 the Committee on Information was asked to continue with its consideration of United Nations public information policies and activities. His delegation was anxious that the Committee should continue to assist the Secretariat in reorganizing its priorities and in co-ordinating its activities in that sphere. There were many aspects of that work which could be improved, and funds could be saved by changing priorities and by ensuring proper co-ordination of all United Nations information and communications activities.

23. The draft resolution confirmed and reinforced the division and balance of jurisdiction and activity among the various member organizations of the United Nations system. It contained a number of interesting proposals for new or expanded information activities and called for a variety of studies. It was by no means clear at the present time what the cost would be of those activities and document A/SPC/34/L.22 did not deal with that question. When the Committee dealt with the

(Mr. Brook, Australia)

results of the various enquiries which would be made, the question of costs would be an important aspect of any decision which it would then take.

24. As for the granting of facilities to United Nations radio (para. 22 (vi)), the Australian authorities did not exercise control over national broadcasting stations and would not be able to share in that effort.

25. His delegation had also joined the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.16/Rev.1. It was particularly pleased that the outcome of the study mentioned in paragraph 2, and the recommendations which might be made by the Paris Conference in April 1980, had not been prejudged in any way.

26. Miss FRANK (Netherlands) said that her delegation fully endorsed the explanation of vote given by the representative of Ireland, on behalf of the nine members of the European Community. Her delegation was particularly concerned by some paragraphs of draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1 which referred to UNESCO and subsequently to the role of the United Nations General Assembly, given the key position of UNESCO in the field of information and mass communications.

27. She stressed that the paragraphs dealing with national broadcasting stations created some problems for her Government, since the Netherlands world broadcasting station was an institution independent of the Government. Nevertheless, her Government was willing to make suggestions on the matter to the world broadcasting station.

28. Mr. Shi JINKUN (China) stated his agreement with the two draft resolutions which had been adopted. He felt confident in thus supporting the development of the national broadcasting of information by developing countries and in strengthening international exchange and co-operation in that field. His delegation had already stated its position on certain documents referred to in draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1.

29. Mr. NISIBORI (Japan) said that his delegation in a spirit of conciliation, had joined the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1 to indicate its support for increased co-operation among all Member States in improving United Nations public information policies and activities and the existing international information and communications system. Nevertheless, his delegation did not fully agree with some words and ideas contained in that draft.

30. His delegation thought that the important work initiated during the previous year by the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies should be followed up.

31. Concerted efforts on the part of all the parties concerned were required to hold a more constructive dialogue aimed at finding practicable means to improve the current system of world information and communications.

32. Mr. CERGA (Albania) expressed his delegations solidarity with the efforts made by developing countries to eliminate injustice and prevent the intervention of the

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(Mr. Cerga, Albania)

imperialist super Powers in the field of information to achieve their own aims. The long hours spent in adopting the draft resolution were yet another example of the tactics of the imperialist, capitalist and neo-colonialist Powers.

33. He wished to dissociate his delegation from the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1. He had strong reservations on some of its paragraphs, including preambular paragraph 6, which referred to the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. His Government maintained that that Conference and any decisions adopted at it had served and continued to serve the interests of the imperialist super Powers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

34. Mr. DOLLING (Sweden) said that while his delegation had joined the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1, that did not signify agreement with the idea in operative paragraph 2 of establishing an international fund for the development of communications, nor with other passages which prejudged the outcome of the Intergovernment Planning Conference on Communication Development, to be held in Paris in April 1980.

35. Mr. GARRIGUES (Spain) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1 since it considered that the draft resolution on the whole, responded to the need to update the public information policy of the United Nations. He also welcomed the renewal of the mandate of the Committee on Information and the increase in its membership. Spain, which was a member of that Committee and which had participated with interest in its work, had followed closely the drafting of the resolution under consideration and welcomed the results which had emerged from the constructive dialogue. It shared, however, some of the reservations expressed with regard to specific aspects of the draft resolution. In particular, he emphasized that the review and revamping of the United Nations information policy in the light of the new world information order should not cause members to become lost in overly broad objectives, which would affect the very effectiveness of the Committee on Information. The new world information order must be directed towards promoting the free flow of information as the safeguard of human rights and peace and understanding among nations.

36. Spain supported the priority work of UNESCO in the information field and the necessary collaboration between the Committee on Information and that organization. It also agreed that the need to maintain a linguistic balance in the dissemination of information by the United Nations should be reaffirmed and he advocated in particular the publication in Spanish of various publications, including the UN Chronicle, at the same time as the other language versions.

37. His delegation was aware of the financial implications of various provisions of the draft resolution, but was confident that they would be kept to a minimum.

38. Mr. BELOBROV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1, since it took a sympathetic view of the strong desires of the developing countries to decolonize the mass media, put an end to the monopoly of the Western Powers and establish a new information order based on the strengthening of sovereignty and the national legislation of each country and subordinated to the interests of the strengthening of international peace and security and mutual understanding among peoples.

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(Mr. Belobrov, USSR)

39. The draft resolution reflected the just demand of the majority of countries for an intensification within the United Nations of the process of restructuring international relations in the information sphere. The draft resolution provided, in particular, for the continuation of the Committee on Information and called for the promotion of a new world information order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding.

40. However, part II of the draft resolution had not been drafted in sufficiently clear terms and contained a number of provisions in respect of which the Department of Public Information was requesting additional financial resources under the regular budget of the United Nations. That could have been avoided if the proposals put forward in the Working Group by the delegations of the socialist countries had been accepted. His delegation had reservations with respect to paragraphs 11, 12 and 13, in particular. The cost of all the information activities of the Department of Public Information should be met from the funds already allocated to the Department through the efficient use of available resources. The requests for additional resources made by the Secretariat were unjustified.

41. With regard to paragraph 11, the Russian language, which had been an official and working language of all the organs of the United Nations since the inception of the Organization, should be included among the languages of the proposed adaptation unit. Otherwise, the Secretary-General would fail to comply fully with the request to ensure a balance in the use of official languages in United Nations information activities.

42. Mr. KOUYATE (Guinea) said that a number of clarifications were called for with regard to some statements made at the current meeting. First, he recalled that there had been talk of poorly informed people. His delegation found it strange that that problem affected to a large extent public opinion in western Europe. In keeping with the spirit of paragraph 22 (iii) of draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1 United Nations Radio in Geneva should seek to remedy that situation.

43. It had also been suggested that the priorities of the Department of Public Information should be altered. His delegation agreed with the reordering of priorities, provided that it benefited the developing countries, since the Department had been in existence since 1948, when most of the developing countries had not been Members of the United Nations. With regard to possible confrontations, his country was, of course, in favour of conciliation, provided that it took fully into account the interests of the developing countries.

44. Much stress had been placed on the second preambular paragraph, in which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights were mentioned. That should not be used as a pretext for imposing specific conduct on any State which had freely signed those international instruments and was applying them in accordance with its national characteristics, commitments and interests.

45. It had also been said that the inclusion of new expenditure in the United Nations budget should be limited to the fullest extent possible. New expenditure, however, reflected the new requirements of new members of the international



(Mr. Kouyate, Guinea)

community, which were the most numerous. It seemed dangerous, therefore, to call for a reduction in what had been approved by consensus in a draft resolution. The aim was to ensure that United Nations television staff in Geneva would have work, which they would have if States which had expressed so many reservations would grant the United Nations greater opportunities for retransmitting information on its activities. It was also necessary to assist the Department of Public Information so that press agencies accredited to the United Nations did not, as currently happened, get a jump on it in disseminating information on the Organization. Good intentions were not enough: what was needed was a sincere commitment to the fundamental reform that was necessary in the entire range of the Department's activities.

46. His delegation had felt it necessary to make the foregoing remarks so that it would be understood that the provisions of paragraph 21 of the draft resolution on the struggle against apartheid reflected an historical imperative which would ultimately prevail, despite the attempts to block every channel through which the South African people could listen to the message addressed to them at every session by the United Nations.

47. Mr. PHILON (Greece) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the members of the European Economic Community concerning draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1. His delegation had joined in the consensus on the draft resolution in a spirit of co-operation, and hoped that the new Committee on Information would fulfil the mandate assigned to it in paragraph 2, without encroaching on the work being carried out by UNESCO in that field. His delegation, nevertheless, recognized the primary role which, as indicated in the draft resolution, the General Assembly had in improving United Nations activities in the field of information, with a view to establishing a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order based on freedom of information as defined in relevant United Nations declarations and resolutions.

48. Mr. NEVREKAR (India) expressed thanks on behalf of the Group of 77, for the adoption by consensus of draft resolution A/SPC/34/L.18/Rev.1. He hoped that the spirit of co-operation and conciliation which had prevailed during the negotiations on the draft resolution would continue to guide the future work of the Committee on Information. His delegation was confident that the reservations expressed by a number of delegations would seem less important in the months ahead, given the authentic desire of those delegations for the success of the provisions and proposals contained in the draft resolution.

49. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) welcomed the consensus in support of the draft resolution, which was of historical significance for information activities concerning the United Nations and the strengthening of the existing international system in the light of the new world information order. He welcomed, in particular, the inclusion of paragraph 11, which gave official status to the implementation of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group contained in annex III of the report of the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities.

50. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had thus concluded its consideration of item 53, and requested the Rapporteur to prepare a report on that item for the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.