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Agenda item 67

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Report of the Special Political Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Zahary RADOUKOV (Bulgaria)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The item entitled:

"Questions relating to information:

- (a) Report of the Committee on Information;
- (b) Reports of the Secretary-General;
- (c) Report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization"

was included in the provisional agenda of the thirty-sixth session of the General Assembly in accordance with Assembly resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980.

2. At its 4th plenary meeting, on 18 September 1981, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the Special Political Committee.

3. The Special Political Committee examined the item at its 6th to 12th, 14th and 48th meetings, held between 15 October and 3 December.

4. The Committee had before it the following documents:

- (a) Report of the Committee on Information; 1/

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21).

(b) Report of the Secretary General (A/36/504)

(c) Note by the Secretary General transmitting a report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) prepared in accordance with section I, paragraph 9, of General Assembly resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980 (A/36/530).

5. At its 64th meeting, on 15 October, the Committee heard introductory statements by the Under-Secretary General for Public Information, the Assistant Director-General, Sector of Culture and Communication, of UNESCO, and the Chairman of the Committee on Information.

6. At its 8th meeting, on 19 October, the Committee decided to establish an open-ended Working Group on questions relating to information, under the chairmanship of Mr. Michael E. Sherifis (Cyprus), Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

II. CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTIONS A/SPC/36/L.25
AND A/SPC/36/L.26

7. At the 48th meeting, on 3 December, the representative of Cyprus, Chairman of the Working Group introduced two draft resolutions (A/SPC/36/L.25 and A/SPC/36/L.26) based on the deliberations in the Committee's open-ended Working Group on questions relating to information.

8. At the same meeting, the Committee had before it document A/SPC/36/L.30 containing the statement by the Secretary General on the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/SPC/36/L.25. The Under-Secretary-General for Public Information made a statement in response to questions relating to document A/SPC/36/L.30.

9. At its 48th meeting, on 3 December, the Committee adopted draft resolutions A/SPC/36/L.25 and A/SPC/36/L.26 without a vote (see para. 12).

10. Thereafter, statements in connexion with their positions on the draft resolutions were made by the representatives of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (on behalf of the States members of the European Community), Japan, the German Democratic Republic (also on behalf of Bulgaria, the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), Canada, the United States of America, Spain, Sweden, the Philippines (on behalf of the Asian Group), Guinea (on behalf of the African Group), India, Nicaragua (on behalf of the Latin American Group) and Ecuador.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE

11. The Special Political Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Questions relating to information

A

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 34/181 and 34/182 of 18 December 1979 and 35/201 of 16 December 1980,

Recalling the relevant provisions of the Final Declaration of the Sixth Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, held at Havana from 3 to 9 September 1979, 2/ of the Declaration of the Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi from 9 to 13 February 1981, 3/ and of the Fifth Meeting of the Inter-Governmental Council of Ministers of Information of Non Aligned Countries, held at Georgetown in May 1981,

Recalling the relevant resolutions adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity at its eighteenth session, held at Nairobi in June 1981, 4/

Recalling the relevant provisions of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, signed at Helsinki on 1 August 1975,

Recalling also the relevant provisions of the Declaration of the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace, 5/

Recalling the intergovernmental conferences on communication policies held respectively at San José in July 1976, Kuala Lumpur in February 1979 and Yaoundé in July 1980, the preparatory meeting of experts for the intergovernmental planning conference to develop institutional arrangements and systematic collaborative consultation on communication development activities, needs and plans, held at Washington in November 1979, and the Intergovernmental Conference for Co-operation on Activities, Needs and Programmes for Communications Development, held in Paris from 14 to 21 April 1980, as well as the international seminars on the development of communication held under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, such as that which took place at Tashkent in September 1979,

Recalling resolution 4/21 adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its twenty-first

2/ See A/34/542, annex, sect. I.

3/ See A/36/116, annex.

4/ See A/36/564, annex II.

5/ General Assembly resolution 33/73.

session, 6/ in which it resolved to establish, within the framework of the organization, the International Programme for the Development of Communication and to elect the Intergovernmental Council of the Programme,

Recalling also that the implementation of the objectives of the International Programme for the Development of Communication requires the co-operation of all those interested and concerned,

Considering that communication plays a fundamental role as a vehicle for information and an instrument of acquiring knowledge and know-how and, consequently, represents an important dimension in the life of societies,

Conscious of the important contribution which the media of mass information and communication and the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information can make in co-operation between all countries, the strengthening of international peace and security, the promotion of human rights, international understanding, progress of education and science, the preservation of their cultural identities and promotion of their socio-cultural values,

Recognizing the central role of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the field of communication and information, within its mandate, as well as the progress accomplished by the organization in that field,

1. Takes note with satisfaction of the report of the Director-General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the implementation of the International Programme for the Development of Communication; 7/

2. Considers that resolution No. 1 adopted by the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its first session, held in Paris from 15 to 22 June 1981, 8/ constitutes an important step in the implementation of the Programme;

3. Expresses its appreciation to all Member States that announced their contributions to the Programme in the form of financial means, manpower, materials, technology and training for the development of communication, especially taking note of the contributions in this regard from developing countries;

4. Calls upon Member States -- developed and developing alike -- and organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental organizations and concerned public and private enterprises, to lend their support to the expansion of the Programme's resources;

6/ A/35/362/Add.1, annex I.

7/ A/36/530, annex.

8/ Ibid., appendix I.

5. Invites Member States to take the necessary steps, within the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and other organizations of which they are members, to secure satisfactory implementation of the Programme through the allocation of additional resources.

6. Endorses the appeal of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization addressed to Member States, international organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, as well as other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, professional groups or other available sources, to make contributions to the Programme as soon as possible;

7. Invites the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session a progress report on the implementation of the Programme as well as on the efforts of the organization for the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

B

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 3535 (XXX) of 17 December 1975, 31/139 of 16 December 1976, 33/115 A to C of 18 December 1978, 34/181 and 34/182 of 18 December 1979 and 35/201 of 16 December 1980 on questions relating to information,

Recalling article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 9/ which provides that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression and that this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers, and article 29, which stipulates that these rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations,

Recalling also articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 10/

Recalling its resolutions 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI) of 1 May 1974, containing the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, 3281 (XXIX) of 12 December 1974, containing the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, and 3362 (S-VII) of 16 September 1975 on development and international economic co-operation,

Recalling the Final Declaration of the Sixth Conference of Heads of State and Government of Non-Aligned Countries held at Havana from 3 to 9 September 1979, 2/

9/ General Assembly resolution 217 A (III).

10/ General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

which stressed that co-operation in the field of information is an integral part of the struggle for the creation of new international relations in general and of a new world information order in particular, and also recalling the Declaration of the Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi from 9 to 13 February 1981, 3/ which re-emphasized the importance of the interrelationship between information and communication systems and the development processes in the developing countries.

Recalling the 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, Anartheid and Incitement to War, 11/ adopted on 28 November 1978 by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, as well as the relevant resolutions on information and mass communications adopted by the General Conference at its nineteenth twentieth and twenty-first sessions,

Recalling the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, signed at Helsinki on 1 August 1975,

Recalling also the Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace, 5/

Conscious of the need for all to collaborate in the establishment of a new world information and communication order based, inter alia, on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information, guaranteeing the diversity of the sources of information and free access to information, and, in particular, the urgent need to change the dependent status of the developing countries in the field of information and communication, and intended also to strengthen peace and international understanding,

Reaffirming the primary role which the General Assembly is to play in elaborating, co-ordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information and recognizing the central and important role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in the field of information and communication,

Reaffirming that the establishment of a new world information and communication order is linked to the new international economic order and is an integral part of the international development process,

Emphasizing the complementarity of the activities in the field of information and communication and the need to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination between the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system that deal with different aspects of information and communication.

11/ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, Twentieth Session, vol. I, Resolutions, pp. 100-104.

Emphasizing that the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communications within the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization constitutes an important step in the development of the infrastructures of communications in the developing countries,

Expressing its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information as reflected in its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session, 12/

Expressing its appreciation to the Joint United Nations Information Committee for its efforts towards improving co-ordination of the public information activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system,

Taking note with satisfaction of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information 13/

Also taking note with satisfaction of the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7/

1. Approves the report of the Committee on Information and its recommendations 12/

2. Reaffirms the mandate given to the Committee on Information by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/182, namely:

(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order.

(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications.

(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order, intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly.

3. Requests the Committee on Information, keeping in mind its mandate, the essential tasks of which are to continue to examine the policies and activities of the Department of Public Information and to promote the establishment of a new,

12/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21).

13/ A/36/504.

more just and more effective world information and communication order, to avoid any overlapping of its activities on this subject with those of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, while stressing at the same time the ever-growing significance of the close working co-operation between the United Nations and the latter organization;

4. Requests the Committee on Information to seek the co-operation and active participation of all organizations of the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in the fulfilment of its mandate;

5. Affirms its strong support for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and for its efforts to promote the establishment of a new world information and communication order;

6. Reiterates its appeal to Member States, to the information and communication media, both public and private, as well as to non-governmental organizations, to disseminate more widely information about the activities of the United Nations and, inter alia, about the efforts of the developing countries towards their economic, social and cultural progress and about the efforts of the international community to achieve international social justice and economic development, international peace and security and the progressive elimination of international inequities and tensions;

7. Requests that the Joint United Nations Information Committee, as the essential instrument for interagency co-ordination and co-operation in the field of public information and for the development of a common public information approach covering all aspects of the activities of the organizations within the United Nations system, should continue with its task and that it should be strengthened and made more effective.

8. Reaffirms the importance of the rapidly increasing role of United Nations public information programmes in fostering public understanding and support of United Nations activities and requests the Secretary General to continue to review the current activities of the Department of Public Information with a view to ensuring a better and more efficient use of its available resources.

9. Reiterates the recommendation contained in its resolution 35/201 that additional resources for the Department of Public Information should be commensurate with the increase in the activities of the United Nations which the Department is called upon to cover for the purpose of public information, and that the Secretary-General should provide such resources to the Department to this end where needed;

10. Requests the Secretary General to ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information as the focal point for the co-ordination and implementation of the public information tasks of the United Nations, should be strengthened along the lines established in the pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly and recommendations of the Committee on Information, to ensure a

more coherent coverage of, and a better knowledge about, the United Nations and its work, especially in its priority areas, such as international peace and security, disarmament, peace-keeping and peace making operations, decolonization, the promotion of human rights, the struggle against racial discrimination, the integration of women in the struggle for peace and development, the establishment of the new international economic order and the establishment of a new world information and communication order, activities against apartheid, the work of the United Nations Council for Namibia and the continuation of broadcast media programmes on women, due regard being given at the same time to economic and social issues.

11. Requests the Secretary-General to take measures to ensure that the existing imbalance in the staff of the Department of Public Information should be rectified and, until equitable geographical distribution is achieved, to take urgent steps to increase the representation of the group of developing countries, particularly at senior and policy-making levels, by a policy of recruiting from among their nationals, taking into account also the interests of other under-represented groups of countries, in accordance with Article 101, paragraph 3, of the Charter of the United Nations and General Assembly resolutions 33/143 of 20 December 1978 and 35/210 of 17 December 1980, and to submit a progress report to the Committee on Information at its next session;

12. Requests the Secretary General:

(a) To ensure that the Department of Public Information makes a more strenuous effort to ensure balance in the use of official languages in the publications and programmes of the Department;

(b) To strengthen the competent unit in the Department of Public Information for the production of United Nations information material in Spanish for dissemination through United Nations information centres and United Nations Development Programme offices located in Spanish-speaking countries;

(c) To report on the above to the Committee on Information at its next session;

13. Requests the Secretary General:

(a) To submit a plan for the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division of the Department of Public Information to the Committee on Information for its decision, at the Committee's next substantive session, keeping in mind General Assembly resolution 35/201 and following the views expressed and suggestions made in the course of the debate on this subject;

(b) Without prejudice to the above plan for regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division, to take necessary action for the establishment of a separate Caribbean Unit in the Radio Service and the expansion of its African Unit, to consider the enlargement of the Arabic Unit in the Radio Service as far as

possible through redeployment of existing resources and to maintain and enhance its functions as the producer of radio and television programmes to the Arabic-speaking countries;

(c) To make specific proposals to the Committee on Information at its next session for the purpose of enabling the Asian Unit to undertake programming at a meaningful level in other major languages of the region;

(d) To submit to the Committee on Information at its next substantive session a comprehensive report on the implementation of subparagraphs (b) and (c) above;

14. Further requests the Secretary-General to implement fully his proposals presented to and endorsed by the Committee on Information, for the expansion of United Nations shortwave broadcasts; 14/

15. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information continues to develop active links with a broad spectrum of international and regional news organizations to encourage more media coverage of United Nations activities

16. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information continues and further strengthens its co-operation with the non-aligned countries in the field of information, particularly with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies as well as with regional news agencies of developing countries; and in this regard, requests that the Department should be adequately equipped to supply the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, as well as regional news agencies of the developing countries, with information on the activities of the United Nations system which they are disseminating;

17. Requests the Secretary-General to consider the possibility that the Department of Public Information receive the daily dispatches of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and regional news agencies of developing countries in the interest of more balance in the sources of information used by the Department;

18. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information extends and strengthens its co-operation with the national news agencies of developing countries;

19. Notes the important role of the United Nations information centres and their unique position to co-operate directly with national media and disseminators of information in their areas;

20. Requests the Secretary-General:

(a) To take appropriate steps to strengthen the capacity of the information centres where needed;

(b) To present, on the basis of consultations between the Department of Public Information and other United Nations bodies concerned, drawing on the findings of the Joint Inspection Unit in its report, 15/ the Secretary-General's comments thereon 16/ and the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on co-ordination in the field of public information activities, 17/ a study on the ways and means to enhance the role of the information centres and, along policy guidelines set by the General Assembly, aiming at measures increasing their functional flexibility, enabling them to adjust their work to the needs and wishes of the countries concerned increasing the effectiveness of their work and improving the co-ordination of their activities as the decentralized part of the structure of the Department of Public Information;

21. Reaffirms the importance of the role played by Development Forum and its decision that the continued publication of that periodical as an interagency project is essential and requests the Secretary General to conclude his review of its financial status, to continue to seek to ensure long-term financial support for that publication from the organizations of the United Nations system and to report on this subject to the Committee on Information at its next session;

22. Stresses the importance of the presentation in United Nations publications of various points of view and experiences, in particular information about the efforts of the developing countries towards their economic, social and cultural progress;

23. Requests the Secretary General as far as possible within existing resources to implement fully the recommendations of the Committee on Information, as well as to continue implementation of the recommendations set out in section III of General Assembly resolution 35/201 and of the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the Committee on Information 18/ as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 35/201;

24. Requests the Secretary General to report on the progress made in implementing the recommendations mentioned in paragraph 23 above to the Committee on Information at its next substantive session;

15/ A/36/379.

16/ A/36/379/Add.1

17/ A/36/218.

18/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/34/21 and Corr.1), annex III, sect. C.

25. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session

26. Requests the Secretary General to report on the implementation of the present resolution to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session

27. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of the thirty-seventh session the item entitled "Questions relating to information .