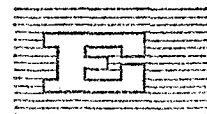


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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Thirty-eighth session
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FURTHER PROMOTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE
PROGRAMME AND METHODS OF WORK OF THE COMMISSION;
ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES AND WAYS AND MEANS WITHIN THE
UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE
ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Development of public information activities in the
field of human rights

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 24 (XXXVII) of 10 March 1981, the Commission on Human Rights requested the Secretary-General to keep the Commission informed on the implementation of the programmes designed to enhance public information activities in the field of human rights contained in his earlier reports. 1/
2. In paragraph 3 of the same resolution, the Commission invited the Secretary-General to "consider ways and means of facilitating the stimulation of public interest in the promotion and protection of human rights and to report thereon to the Commission at its thirty-eighth session".
3. Finally, in paragraph 5, the Commission requested him to report each year on the implementation of the dissemination programme covering international instruments on human rights.
4. The three chapters of the present report have been prepared pursuant to the requests mentioned above.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING PROGRAMMES

5. This chapter contains a résumé of the activities undertaken in implementation of existing programmes designed to enhance public information activities in the field of human rights.

A. Department of Public Information

1. Publications programme

6. Press releases issued by the Department of Public Information (DPI) gave coverage to the meetings of the Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary bodies, as well as to debates on human rights in the General Assembly and other United Nations organs. At the same time, resolutions and other documents on the subject were made available to information media and attention was drawn to developments in the field of human rights at DPI press briefings. In Geneva, efforts made to disseminate information on human rights activities represented 450,000 copies of press releases issued to the news media during the year, while special briefings were organized on human rights activities for the 200 journalists accredited to the United Nations Office at Geneva.
7. Human rights topics were also covered in the Yearbook of the United Nations, Basic Facts about the United Nations and the UN Chronicle and the magazine Objective: Justice carried material on racial discrimination. In addition, Development Forum featured the following six articles in 1981 relating to human rights and development: "Displaced people - A development asset" (January); "International conferences on assistance to refugees in Africa" (four-page supplement) (January); "Absorbing minorities" (June); "Development as a right" (June); "Who was there first?" (August); "World hunger, ethics and the right to eat" (August).
8. Finally, three language editions of The International Bill of Human Rights and one edition of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were reprinted and three new language editions of Human Rights - 50 questions and answers about human rights and United Nations activities to promote them, as well as a booklet and a leaflet on the situation of women under apartheid, were published in 1981.

1/ E/CN.4/1368 and E/CN.4/1436.

2. Radio and Visual Services

9. Regular coverage of significant events connected with human rights continued to be provided during 1981 in the daily newscasts and in the weekly news summaries which are used by radio and television correspondents, as well as the regional units of the radio service. For instance, subjects such as the work of the Commission on Human Rights on racial discrimination, apartheid, the rights of the child, women's rights and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and deliberations in the Economic and Social Council relating thereto were covered in detail.

10. The subject of human rights was also featured in a number of radio programmes which are being widely distributed in several languages, such as the daily quarter-hour anti-apartheid programmes, the weekly analytical programme "Perspective", and regional programmes such as "UN Calling Asia", "Caribbean Echo", "UN Africa", "Puntos Cardinales", "Perspectivas Internacionales", "Women", and "Afrak Alamiah". In Geneva, the Radio Unit contributed actively to publicizing human rights issues through radio interviews in French, English and Arabic for the Geneva programme "Tour d'Horizon" which served as an input to other human rights radio programmes produced at Headquarters.

11. Human Rights issues were also included in the following documentary film programmes:

"You have struck a rock", a 26-minute film on the South African women's campaign against the Government's pass laws; "Refuge", a half-hour film on the plight of the refugees in Africa; "Refuge in Somalia" (4'18"); "The Survivors" (6'56"); "After 30 Years" (3'35"); "Save the Children" (5').

At the same time, vignettes on the refugee situation in Somalia, Kampuchea, Palestine and Uganda, as well as sixty-second spots on the elimination of racial discrimination and on Namibia's struggle for independence, were produced in English, French, Spanish and Arabic, and released for world-wide distribution on the special commemorative days.

12. Four programmes of the television series "World Chronicle" were devoted to various aspects of human rights, and interviews were conducted with the Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, the President of the General Assembly, the Chairman of the Special Committee Against Apartheid, and the Director of the Division of Human Rights.

3. Special Briefings and Programmes

13. A number of special briefings and programmes conducted during 1981 focused on human rights questions. These include: the 21st Fellowship Programme for Educators held in Addis Ababa from 19 October to 6 November, in which 19 specialists from 15 countries participated; the DPI Graduate Student Intern Programme, which included 100 students from 55 countries; the Geneva Graduate study programme, a high-level seminar of information for post-graduate university students and diplomats from all parts of the world, which devoted several lectures and round-tables to the subject of human rights; a special briefing held in April on "Human Rights Today" by the Director of the Division of Human Rights and a special meeting held on 26 March to mark the week of solidarity with people struggling against racism and racial discrimination, on the theme "Women and Labour under Apartheid".

14. The United Nations Information Centres also played an active role in the dissemination of information on human rights, both as a regular part of their activities, and in the implementation of special programmes or commemorations. Thus, the booklet United Nations Today - 1981 (Suggestions for Speakers), widely distributed through the Information Centres on United Nations Day, contains substantial information about human rights. And in 1981 directors of Information Centres were instructed to undertake special programmes emphasizing the evolution of the liberation struggle in Namibia and South Africa, in connection with the Week of Solidarity with Colonial Peoples of Southern Africa Fighting for Freedom, Independence and Equal Rights (25-31 May). The directors' attention was also drawn to the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggling People of South Africa (16 June) and the International Day of Solidarity with the Struggle of Women of South Africa and Namibia (9 August). Special guide-lines were also sent to the United Nations Information Centres to obtain international community participation in United Nations Day, Human Rights Day and the Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

B. Division of Human Rights

15. In regard to the Yearbook on Human Rights, work has continued to proceed satisfactorily in bringing that publication up to date. The Yearbook for 1975-1976 was issued in the course of 1981. The Yearbook for 1977-1978 has already been submitted for printing and will be published in the first quarter of 1982. Though the Yearbook is now, again, an annual publication, it has been found more efficient to submit two yearbooks for printing at the same time. The Yearbook for 1979 and the Yearbook for 1980 will thus be submitted together during the first half of this year.

16. Considerable progress has also been made in regard to the quarterly Bulletin of Human Rights. A more prompt production of the Bulletin has been achieved and the publication is now up to date. Requests for additions to the Bulletin's mailing list also continue to grow.

17. Further, in 1981 the information publication Notice, produced by the Division of Human Rights in co-operation with the information service, was issued monthly in English and French and provided the media and non-governmental organizations with information on human rights meetings and on human rights publications and studies.

II. STIMULATION OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

18. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 24 (XXXVII) the Commission on Human Rights invites the Secretary-General to report on the ways and means which could facilitate the stimulation of public interest in the promotion and protection of human rights. The present chapter lists the activities planned and undertaken jointly by the Division of Human Rights and the Department of Public Information, which it is felt can best achieve that goal.

19. All the items of the existing programmes, described in chapter I of this report, are intended not only to respond to public interest in human rights, but also to stimulate it. Some of them, however, are more directly concerned with the stimulation of public interest. This is particularly true of the programmes relating to non-governmental organizations, to visitors to the United Nations and to commemorative days like Human Rights Day (10 December).

20. United Nations human rights activities being centred at Geneva, close and regular contact was maintained there between the Information Service and the Division of Human Rights through regular meetings of the Joint Task Force which reviewed measures required to enhance information support activities in the field of human rights. In 1981, in order to improve the flow of human rights information to New York, a liaison officer was assigned to channel this information and suggest human rights reports and studies which might form a basis for articles in publications issued by the Department of Public Information.

21. A considerable amount of the two-way contact between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations Office at Geneva focuses on the subject of human rights. These non-governmental organizations are kept regularly informed of all pertinent developments throughout the United Nations system in this field. A special effort is, however, made in regard to sessions of United Nations bodies meeting in Geneva on the subject of human rights. For instance, special briefings by the Director of the Division of Human Rights of non-governmental organizations are held before meetings such as those of the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities.

22. A complementary role in this regard is also played by the Visitors Service, which in 1981 welcomed over 120,000 persons to the Palais des Nations.

23. The main commemorative event focused on human rights is, of course, Human Rights Day, which is observed on 10 December. In 1981, from 10 December to 30 December, three major exhibitions of the sets of 30 woodcuts depicting the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights created by Brazilian artist, Otavio Roth, were exhibited to celebrate human rights simultaneously at United Nations Headquarters in New York, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the International Centre at Vienna. Complete sets of colour transparencies of the 30 articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will be reproduced and distributed to all United Nations Information Centres for use on television, print media or as projected sets for special events, while black and white prints of the art work will be distributed through the United Nations Photo Library for interested users.

24. Other dates of special importance to human rights, such as International Day of Solidarity with People in South Africa and the International Day of Palestinian Peoples, as well as the anniversaries of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are regularly celebrated in New York and at Geneva.

25. As regards the anniversaries of the adoption of the Universal Declaration, the General Assembly on 16 December 1981 adopted resolution 36/169 which, inter alia, recommends the following measures to be taken in regard to the celebration of the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration:

(a) Organization of commemorative events at United Nations Headquarters, at the United Nations Office at Geneva and at the Vienna International Centre on or around 10 December 1983;

(b) Organization in 1983 at Geneva of a special international seminar to discuss the experiences of different countries in the implementation of international standards on human rights;

(c) Dissemination by the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat of appropriate public information, broadcasting and audio-visual material designed to draw attention to and emphasize the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the role played and work done by the United Nations to ensure the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(d) Issuance of updated versions in all official languages of the United Nations of the publications Human Rights: A Compilation of International Instruments of the United Nations 2/ and United Nations Action in the Field of Human Rights. 3/

(e) The design and distribution of an appropriate United Nations poster to commemorate the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

III. DISSEMINATION PROGRAMME COVERING INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

26. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 24 (XXXVII), the Commission on Human Rights requested the Secretary-General to report each year to the Commission on the implementation of the dissemination programme covering international instruments on human rights, as proposed in the report submitted to the Commission at its thirty-seventh session. 4/

27. Since this programme is being implemented in two stages, each of two years, beginning with the 1982-1983 biennium, the present chapter can reflect little more than the preliminary measures taken late in 1981. These refer primarily to the collation of documents for the publication in Arabic of the volume Human Rights: A Compilation of International Instruments. It is recalled that this exists in English, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese.

28. First steps are also due to be taken in the near future towards the publication of more language versions of The International Bill of Human Rights.

29. Finally, preparations are already under way for the publication of a more detailed edition of the booklet entitled: Human Rights - International Instruments: Signatures, Ratifications, Accessions, etc. 5/ Throughout 1981, the Division of Human Rights received not only numerous requests for this booklet, but also a considerable number of inquiries related to aspects of international instruments on human rights which the present version of the booklet does not cover. This improved version of the booklet should be issued by mid-1982.

2/ United Nations publication, Sales No. 78.XIV.2.

3/ United Nations publication, Sales No. 79.XIV.6.

4/ E/CN.4/1436.

5/ ST/HR/4/Rev.3.