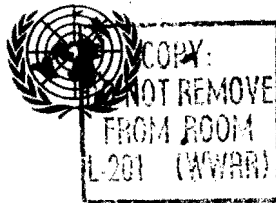


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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
9th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 27 October 1982
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUBAREZ

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SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 67: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/37/174)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (A/37/21)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/37/446)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (A/37/453)

1. Mr. MORENO-SALCEDO (Philippines) said that his Government had been actively involved in the continuing efforts of the Organization to examine and resolve problems relating to information and communications. It had consistently held the view that although freedom of information was a legitimate concept, it must be based on responsibility lest it become a potentially dangerous instrument at the service of biased, selfish or vested interests. Unfortunately, the free flow of information had enabled mass media monopolies to dominate the international flow of news, often to the detriment of developing countries, which found themselves vulnerable to the unrelenting one-way flow of ideas and values. The current imbalance in the flow of information could not continue. Steps must be taken toward the speedy establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information.

2. It was regrettable that certain sectors of the mass media monopolies erroneously regarded efforts to bring about a new world information and communication order as a violation of freedom of expression. Although some progress had been made in convincing the major world information centres that it was in their own interests to expand their coverage of developing countries, certain media monopolies persisted in disseminating gross misrepresentations about developing countries and their problems, unjustly maligning their Governments and peoples and focusing on failures while glossing over achievements. It was essential to move from debate to implementation, in order to avoid self-defeating delays. His delegation, therefore, welcomed the establishment within UNESCO of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which would enable developing countries to upgrade their communication structures and programmes. It was particularly gratifying to note, in the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization that the Asia-Pacific News Network and the regional bank of films and television programmes in Asia and the Pacific were among the regional projects approved by the Council of IPDC at its meeting held in January 1982. The various projects undertaken by IPDC would contribute positively to the new world information and communication order, which was an integral part of the international development process. His delegation, therefore, urged all States Members of the United Nations to give financial support to IPDC projects. He expressed satisfaction at the important statement made to the Committee by the Assistant Director-General for Communication of UNESCO and the efforts undertaken by UNESCO to promote the establishment of a new world information order.

(Mr. Moreno-Salcedo, Philippines)

3. The Committee on Information was performing a remarkable job in making recommendations, suggestions and comments on the various public information activities and programmes of DPI. The mandate of the Committee on Information should be renewed so that it could continue its commendable work. The Committee on Information, at its next session, should draw up action-oriented realistic proposals to implement the new world information order.

4. The network of United Nations information centres around the world performed a vital function by disseminating information on what was taking place at Headquarters. The capacity and role of those centres should be strengthened by the reallocation of personnel and resources among different centres, information services and Headquarters. Furthermore, his delegation joined other delegations in calling for the immediate implementation of General Assembly resolution 36/149 (B), which requested a study of the ways and means to enhance the role of information centres within the structure of the Department of Public Information. Such a study would aim at measures to increase the functional independence and flexibility of those centres, adapt their work to the information needs and interests of the countries which they served and assess the essential financial, material and personnel needs of those centres. DPI should devise a more realistic process for determining and evaluating the results of its various information programmes and should ensure that those information programmes were reaching the people for which they had been established.

5. He urged all States Members of the United Nations to support the establishment of a new world information and communication order. Once established, the new order would not only meet the legitimate aspirations of the developing countries for social progress and development, but would also greatly enhance the free circulation of information on a global basis.

6. Mr. HOANG HANH NGUYEN (Viet Nam) said that his delegation firmly supported the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order designed to strengthen peace and international understanding through a wider and better balanced dissemination of information. It also supported all efforts of developing countries to promote and strengthen regional co-operation in the field of information and to put an end to their dependence on the imperialist information monopolies. The establishment of independent national information systems in developing countries was closely linked to the struggle against colonialism in the intellectual and cultural fields and was a factor which could contribute considerably to the elimination of inequities and guarantee a wider dissemination of diversified and objective information in developing countries. His delegation favoured the measures designed to establish closer co-operation and better co-ordination between UNESCO and the General Assembly and the overall strengthening of the influence of the United Nations in the field of information. Viet Nam was prepared to co-operate with the international community in the field of information and communications, in order to further the struggle for peace and security in the world, the development of co-operation between peoples and the establishment of favourable conditions for economic and social progress.

(Mr. Hoang Hanh Nguyen, Viet Nam)

7. It was regrettable that the large Western news agencies, with their material and technical superiority, dominated the field of information, permitting certain Western countries to distort information for slanderous purposes and violate the right of peoples to be fully and correctly informed. The "Radio Free Europe" and "Radio Liberty" broadcasting stations in Europe transmitted, on a daily basis, distorted information about the socialist and progressive countries, in the hope of stirring up hatred among peoples and creating conflict in the world. In South-East Asia, the "Voice of Free Asia" and the press and radio of a large hegemonist nation disseminated slanderous propaganda against the countries of Indo-China, in order to sow discord and strife in the region. He firmly condemned the insidious use of information to aggravate international tensions and the manipulation of the information media for disreputable political purposes.

8. His delegation was concerned at the imbalance between the developed Western countries and the developing countries in the geographic composition of the personnel of DPI. The Department should take urgent measures to overcome the current imbalance in the composition of its radio and visual techniques personnel. The United Nations should provide developing countries with all possible assistance in the field of information, taking due account of their interests and needs and the measures already adopted within the Organization, particularly the assistance given to developing countries to train journalists and technical personnel and enable developing countries to have access to the communication techniques needed to establish national information and communication networks which corresponded to their needs and made use of their own resources.

9. His delegation reaffirmed its readiness to co-operate to the best of its ability with the international community in order to improve the current situation in the field of information and communications and further the struggle for peace and security in the world, the development of co-operation between peoples and the establishment of conditions favouring economic and social progress.

10. Mrs. NOWOTNY (Austria) said that, throughout history man's need and ability to communicate had been the mainstay of intellectual and social life. The enormous technological advances of the recent past, however, had added a new dimension to that situation. A new era in communications had begun. The role of information and communications in relations between States and in the promotion of understanding between peoples of different political, economic, social and cultural backgrounds had become all the more significant, and the United Nations bore a special responsibility in that field. The manner in which the work and the achievements of the Organization were presented sometimes led to misconceptions on the part of the general public. Correct and impartial information about the United Nations was essential to ensure that its objectives were shared by all peoples.

11. The importance of information and communications for economic development could not be over-emphasized, and their potential should warrant the formulation of comprehensive communication policies. Her Government welcomed the fact that a number of important steps had been taken in that direction which would initiate fruitful co-operation at the regional level. The setting up of the International

(Mrs. Nowotny, Austria)

Programme for the Development of Communication in UNESCO would strengthen the capabilities of developing countries through a multilateral framework.

12. In the course of the current debate, the prevailing system of information distribution had again been subject to criticism. Delegations had expressed distrust of the concept of the free flow of information, on the grounds that it had enabled the major news agencies to impose their political beliefs and patterns of thought on developing societies. Increased attention had been directed toward the imbalances in the flow of information between the developed and the developing countries. Austria understood the concern and growing uneasiness in that regard and recognized the need to promote relationships based on interdependence and co-operation. Adjustments could be made, through increased co-operation at the regional and interregional levels and the transfer of appropriate technology, in order to enhance the share of the developing countries in the dissemination of information. More attention should be given to the training of journalists from developing countries and the creation or improvement of educational facilities through a generous system of scholarships for the training of journalists and broadcasters. In that regard, she expressed satisfaction at the expansion of the United Nations Training Programme for Broadcasters and Journalists. Austria had always endeavoured to achieve closer co-operation between the news agencies of various geographic regions. The Austrian Press Agency was actively involved in co-operation between European and Arab news agencies and had also co-operated, on the basis of bilateral agreements, in the exchange of news between national news agencies. In the field of education, her country had participated in the school for the training of journalists in Nairobi since its founding and also offered working facilities for journalists from developing countries.

13. In many cases, justifiable criticism and suggestions for change had been combined with an attack on the principles of freedom of information, freedom of opinion and freedom of expression. That view was as short-sighted as it was dangerous and should be countered in the strongest possible terms. Freedom of information and opinion were basic rights which included freedom of the media in all its various dimensions. That concept had evolved out of the historical intellectual process of the struggle against the censorship of Church and State. The enjoyment of those rights formed part of the fundamental principles of the Austrian Constitution, and their implementation was scrupulously observed. They were based on free access to all sources of information and the free flow of information. It would be unfeasible and undesirable to attempt to change that concept. The extraordinary role which freedom of information and freedom of the media had played in creating the societies of the pluralistic democracies should be constantly kept in mind, and all efforts should be made to guarantee freedom of information as one of democracy's most precious acquisitions and its vital safeguard.

14. Her delegation expressed satisfaction at the work done by the Department of Public Information and noted with appreciation the report of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information concerning the changes and improvements which were being undertaken and his evaluation of the work of DPI.

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(Mrs. Nowotny, Austria)

15. The Committee on Information had reached a consensus on a number of recommendations to be submitted to the General Assembly for adoption. Some of those recommendations were ready for implementation, while others required further study in view of the considerable technical implications involved. The feasibility of such proposals as the creation of a United Nations communication satellite system should be researched in depth. Furthermore, efficient inter-agency co-ordination was indispensable in order to avoid duplication and project a unified image of the United Nations system and its common goal. Her delegation was gratified to learn that the Secretary-General had taken note of its concern regarding the provision of adequate service in the German language through the Information Service at Vienna and was examining the ways in which that service could be strengthened. Her delegation was looking forward to the practical steps which would be taken in that regard.

16. The UNESCO medium-term plan for the period 1984-1989 was a useful innovation. Her delegation agreed with the emphasis placed on the production of material for the young reader and for use in schools. The proposal that the DPI should, in co-operation with UNESCO, produce prototype materials for youth, particularly the lower age groups, and the proposal to step beyond traditional dependence on the media and reach out directly to opinion-makers were very important. The proposals for editors' round tables, the Speakers' Bureau and the Graduate Student Intern Programme were valuable and could produce good results at reasonably low costs. Her delegation, however, had certain misgivings with regard to the proposal to produce an "oral history" of the United Nations in view of the large amount of existing documentation on that subject.

17. Mr. SMITH (Jamaica) observed that the effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations was being questioned now more than at any time in its history. Negative perceptions of the organization could not, however, be dispelled simply by more press releases or a public relations campaign: the problem ran deeper than that. Part of the responsibility of the Special Political Committee consisted in ensuring that United Nations public information activities were of such a nature as to provide international public opinion with a basis for reasoned and balanced judgement on the Organization's effectiveness. That task also came directly within the mandate of the Committee on Information. His delegation therefore welcomed the latter's recommendation that an appeal should be addressed to the whole United Nations system to co-operate in promoting the development activities of the United Nations through the latter's information services. His delegation supported the underlying objective of that recommendation, which was to promote a more comprehensive and realistic image of the activities of the United Nations system.

18. It was regrettable that the concrete results achieved by the United Nations in the economic and social fields were often not conveyed to the public with the same vigour and promptness as its successes and failures in other areas. In that connection, it would have been useful if the report of the Joint United Nations Information Committee on public perceptions of the United Nations had been available to the Special Political Committee for its consideration of item 67.

(Mr. Smith, Jamaica)

19. At least some of the difficulties which the United Nations encountered with regard to public perceptions of its role were the result of factors inherent in the structure and workings of the international exchange of information. That was an issue which had led to differences of view on such questions as freedom of the media, the free circulation of information and the meaning of objectivity and responsibility in the mass media, and his delegation simply wished to reiterate its support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), which played an important role in initiating technical co-operation and assisting in the development of communication infrastructures in developing countries. The achievement of a more effective world information and communication order based on a free, wider and better-balanced dissemination of information depended to a large extent on the strengthening of the communications capacity of the developing countries. His delegation endorsed the selection criteria for the approval and financing of projects decided on by the Intergovernmental Council of IPDC, as described in the report of the Director General of UNESCO (A/37/453). In particular, it noted that four regional projects had already been approved for Latin America and the Caribbean.

20. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General (A/37/446), his delegation was pleased to note that a separate Caribbean Unit had now been established in the Radio Service of DPI.

21. With regard to the recommendations of the Committee on Information, his delegation questioned the need to reiterate en bloc the recommendations approved by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session, rather than referring specifically to those which had yet to be implemented. Implementation was after all the object of the whole exercise. While his delegation noted that the Committee's latest recommendations had at least been grouped according to the specific aspects of the Committee's mandate to which they related, some of them were still vague. For instance, he doubted whether much would be achieved by the approach recommended in recommendation 4.

22. In view of the fact that traditional donor countries had indicated they would no longer be in a position to contribute to Development Forum, his delegation supported recommendation 19. If the international community was unable to keep a useful and relatively inexpensive publication alive through voluntary contributions, that did not augur well for the spirit of co-operation upon which much of the United Nations' work depended. His country was also reluctant to support the continued use of funds from the regular budget for that purpose. With regard to recommendation 24, his delegation hoped that efforts to correct the geographical imbalance in DPI would continue with all due urgency. With regard to recommendation 25, his delegation welcomed the growing links between DPI and the regional news agencies of developing countries and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies.

23. His delegation supported the renewal of the mandate of the Committee on Information, whose work was proceeding in the right direction, despite the diversity of views on the subject of information. In future, however, the Committee should try to limit the number of its recommendations, make them as specific as possible and indicate some order of priority among them.

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24. Mr. KULAWIEC (Czechoslovakia) said that the imbalance in the international flow of information was the result of the inequitable colonialist system which had for centuries prevailed in international relations. While the majority of peoples had gained their political independence, they still faced the tremendous task of eradicating the economic consequences of colonialism. The latter was to blame for a situation in which some 80 per cent of the information circulated daily in the non-Socialist world was the product of a few major Western new agencies on which many developing countries still relied as their main source of information. The need to redress that situation had been reiterated in various international forums, and there was now a consensus on the need to establish a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order. It remained for the relevant United Nations bodies and UNESCO to define that order precisely.

25. The dissemination and exchange of information formed a part of international relations and, as such, must be based on the generally recognized norms and principles governing such relations and, above all, on the principles enshrined in the Charter. In view of the great diversity of views on the subject, one of the main prerequisites for a new international information order was the preparation of an internationally binding document or documents which would formulate principles and norms regulating the international exchange of information. Such principles and norms would redress the existing imbalance and guard against the excesses and abuses of the present international information system. UNESCO had already made a valuable contribution to the formulation of such principles and norms in its 1978 Declaration and in resolution 21 C/19, adopted at the twenty-first session of the General Conference. Those documents provided a foundation on which the United Nations could continue to build. Similarly, the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) would contribute significantly to the strengthening of information and communication infrastructures in the developing countries.

26. Pending the drafting of an internationally binding legal document on the exchange of information, the United Nations could turn to the Charter for guidance. It was a contravention of the Charter when the slogan of the so-called "free flow of information" was used as a screen for attempts at cultural aggression, slanderous propaganda and interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Such attempts by reactionary imperialist forces had increased sharply in recent years, encouraged in particular by the present United States Government. Those forces had openly dissociated themselves from the policy of international détente, which offered the only alternative to the total destruction of mankind. Instead, their stated aim was to achieve superiority, and, to that end, they had launched a vicious and slanderous campaign to discredit socialism, encourage both its internal and external enemies, sow distrust in relations among States and whip up war hysteria on the pretext of a so-called Soviet threat, in order to justify their tremendous arms expenditures.

27. That was where the socialist countries disagreed fundamentally with the imperialist concept of freedom of information, which projected a freedom of the press and information which was understood primarily in terms of free enterprise, namely, as the freedom to make a profit, and in which everything was permissible,

(Mr. Kulawiec, Czechoslovakia)

regardless of the dehumanizing damage inflicted on audiences by sensational, monopoly-controlled media, by a daily diet of violence and aggression and by deliberate efforts to condition the public to accept the idea of nuclear war.

28. In the socialist countries' concept of freedom of information, there was no room for war propaganda, for the propagation of national, racial, or religious hatred or for instigation to discrimination, hostility or violence. Those countries believed that the State had a role to play vis-à-vis its mass media and could not be entirely free of responsibility for their activities. After all, it was States which would be parties to any international agreements on the establishment and implementation of a new world information and communication order. Within that context, it was up to States to develop their own independent information systems and to protect their national sovereignty and cultural identity. Every State had a right to use its mass media to acquaint the world with its intentions, goals and values and to defend itself against untrue or distorted information which might damage its interests and threaten friendly relations among States. Every State also had a right to participate in the international exchange of information on the basis of equality, justice and mutual advantage. In the current international situation, it was also the duty of every State to encourage its mass media to undertake activities which contributed, inter alia, to international peace and understanding. It was on those principles that the new international information and communication order must be based.

29. The World Disarmament Campaign offered a challenge to all countries and their mass media to make a constructive contribution to what was currently the most urgent task facing mankind.

30. His delegation appreciated the extensive and many-faceted activities of the Department of Public Information and continued to believe that the latter must, in its work, be governed by the principles and rules of the Charter and of other United Nations instruments. DPI must continue to play an active role in the co-ordinated activities of the different component parts of the United Nations information system. It must also take responsibility for all United Nations publications and periodicals, ensuring that no untrue, prejudiced or even slanderous information on Member States was printed in such publications.

31. His delegation appreciated the efforts being made to redress the existing geographical imbalance and increase the share of the developing countries in the staff of DPI. Those efforts must be pursued until a balance was reached with regard to all under-represented countries, including those of Eastern Europe.

32. His delegation supported DPI's continuing efforts to carry the message of the United Nations to audiences the world over and to combat the recent ominous trend towards an erosion of the Organization's image in certain countries. Czechoslovakia recognized the unique and irreplaceable role played by the United Nations and worked actively for the further enhancement of its positive influence in all aspects of international relations, including information. Guided by the desire to help to reduce current international tensions and preserve détente, the Government and media of Czechoslovakia would continue to accord high priority to promoting the correct image of the United Nations.

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33. Mr. NOORANI (Pakistan) said that the Committee had discussed the ills that had plagued the world information scene year after year in the hope that diagnosis would lead to their cure. However, the one-way flow of information from North to South had continued, prejudices had not given way to objectivity in news reports on third-world countries and stories of the positive accomplishments of the developing nations had not begun to be given prominence. A handful of news agencies in the developed countries continued to monopolize the dissemination of information to the entire world. Only 20 per cent of that information related to the bulk of humanity living in the developing world, a share which further lost in significance when it was seen that its content was negative in character and disturbing in impact. It was impossible to believe that two thirds of the human race had such little capacity to generate news and could not offer positive stories of sufficient interest to attract the attention of reporters.

34. The reason for such apathy on the part of the media of the developed countries was that they did not fully understand the developing countries' urge to exercise their sovereign right to make changes in accordance with their objective conditions and the genius of their peoples. Because they were not fully conversant with the cultural background, social values and popular aspirations that were shaping the personalities of the developing nations, their reports were sketchy, their interpretations were faulty and their conclusions were wrong. The consequent misunderstandings which widened distances between nations and the ensuing misgivings which created fear instead of trust among peoples were certainly not the objective of information. The situation could be improved if media representatives were given thorough background briefing before being dispatched to report on a given nation or, even better, if local personnel were appointed to cover their own countries.

35. There was a wide gap in the levels of development of the information media in North and South. The figures provided by UNESCO showed how limited was the distribution of information among the peoples who needed it most. If the aspirations of those peoples were to be fulfilled as part of the new international economic order, there was no choice but to give them greater access to sources of information. Many developing countries were unable to carry out the development of information structures by themselves and needed access to the experience and know-how of the developed countries and of the United Nations and its various agencies.

36. His delegation considered IPDC a major step in raising the level of the mass media in the developing countries to the point where they could be used effectively for socio-economic uplift. His Government had decided to make a contribution to IPDC by the middle of 1983.

37. His delegation shared the view that a solid consensus on the establishment of a new world information and communication order seemed to be emerging, even though it had not reached a stage where the concept could be defined with precision. It was, however, optimistic that that stage could be reached in the not-too-distant future. The manner in which the developing countries envisaged the new world information and communication order was clear; it was one in which information

(Mr. Noorani, Pakistan)

flowed in both directions, in which information was presented with due regard to its proper context, in which information was seen through the cultural perceptions of the society to which it pertained, in which the developing countries were less and less dependent on the developed countries and in which the great power of information was placed in the service of world peace and human progress. Those were the genuine aspirations of the developing countries and there was, therefore, no reason why the demand for a new world information order should be misunderstood.

38. For the United Nations to play an important and effective role in that connection, international public opinion would have to think of the Organization more favourably than it did at present. While the responsibility of DPI in that field was unquestioned, Member States also had a responsibility to enhance the image of the United Nations. The Organization was still held in great esteem by public opinion in most of the developing countries, and the media of those countries, among them Pakistan, gave it prominent coverage and displayed a keen interest in its work. The problems of the unfavourable image of the United Nations and lack of interest in its activities was more relevant to the media of the developed countries, and DPI should, therefore, direct its efforts more towards those countries.

39. His delegation had been pleased to note, from the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/37/446, the expeditious manner in which the implementation of General Assembly resolution 36/149 had been undertaken.

40. His delegation had noted with particular satisfaction the emphasis in the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/37/453) on the need to set in motion practical technical co-operation to develop information and communication structures. The Intergovernmental Council of IPDC had been able to establish priorities and selection criteria for approving and financing projects which would greatly facilitate the full realization of the objectives of IPDC. His delegation warmly welcomed the Council's approval of two specific projects for Asia and the Pacific which would immensely benefit the countries of the region. The UNESCO programme in the field of information and communication and the draft medium-term plan for 1984-1989 were highly encouraging.

41. It was a matter of great satisfaction to his delegation that the 43 recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21), all of which it supported, had been arrived at by consensus. He was sure that the Special Political Committee would also work in the same spirit of accommodation and would reach a consensus on those recommendations.

42. Mr. VALTASAARI (Finland), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said that freedom to seek, receive and impart information was a basic human right and an important prerequisite for the exercise of other rights. The public information activities of the United Nations were an essential tool for the creation of the public support required for the Organization to attain its objectives. The work of the United Nations in the field of public information must reflect its general goals and objectives and must also respond to current needs.

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(Mr. Valtasaari, Finland)

In his report on the work of the Organization (A/37/1), the Secretary-General had called attention to the erosion of its authority, and the suggestions which he had made there, which had the support of the Nordic Governments, should also guide the conduct of information activities. It was of fundamental political importance that the United Nations should be perceived as providing a ready and adaptable means for settling disputes and for dealing with other issues of common concern.

43. The recommendations submitted to the General Assembly by the consensus of the Committee on Information reflected the collective priorities of that Committee, and the Nordic delegations wished to single out those to which they attached particular importance.

44. Disarmament ranked high among their priorities since the ever-accelerating arms race and the lack of results in disarmament were serious threats to world peace and security. Although the outcome of the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament had been generally disappointing, that session had become the focal point of a remarkable surge of public support for disarmament. The Nordic Governments supported the World Disarmament Campaign launched by the session, stressed the importance of its universal implementation and considered it essential that non-governmental organizations should be assigned a strengthened role in the Campaign, as proposed by the Secretary-General. They also supported the recommendation that DPI should fulfil a role in implementing the Campaign, while the substantive input would be the responsibility of the Centre for Disarmament.

45. The Nordic delegations had repeatedly expressed the view that a more prominent place should be given to services related to information on economic, social and cultural development within the overall information activities of the United Nations. Public understanding of the needs and aspirations of the developing countries could not be achieved without increased efforts to disseminate information on the problems of development.

46. The need for increased joint efforts in the field of promoting the understanding of and respect for human rights was all too evident in the light of frequent violations of such rights in many parts of the world.

47. The Nordic Governments recognized the need for a new world information and communication order aiming at the promotion of mass media structures and policies of a kind to enable the public to form opinions on the basis of the free circulation and better-balanced dissemination of information. They had supported the establishment of IPDC, and they considered that the adoption of a number of concrete projects at the second session of the Intergovernmental Council represented significant progress. The Nordic countries had given considerable support to the development of communication. The further strengthening of that support was under consideration, and some of the Nordic Governments had already made financial contributions to IPDC.

(Mr. Valtasaari, Finland)

48. The Nordic countries had supported and continued to support measures to strengthen the United Nations information centres and to make them more efficient and looked forward to the study requested from the Secretary-General under the terms of General Assembly resolution 36/149 and referred to by the Committee on Information in its recommendation 22 (c). The Centres could bring information on United Nations activities closer to audiences in various regions of the world and could also function as focal points for two-way communication.

49. The financial basis for the continuation of Development Forum should be secured through the United Nations regular budget and it would also be helpful if all United Nations organs and agencies concerned with development co-operation would confirm their support for its financing.

50. The Nordic delegations fully supported the recommendation that the report of the Joint United Nations Information Committee on public perceptions of the United Nations system should be presented to the Committee on Information for its comments.

51. The Nordic countries were prepared to participate actively in the development of the information and communication mechanisms of the United Nations, with a view to improving the ability of the Organization to perform the tasks set forth in the Charter.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.