

United Nations

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records*



SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE

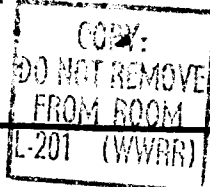
14th meeting

held on

Monday, 1 November 1982

at 10.30 a.m.

New York



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUBAREZ (Yemen)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 67: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

AGENDA ITEM 104: PROGRAMME PLANNING

- (b) MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1984-1989

UN LIBRARY

NOV 24 1982

UN/SA COLLECTION

* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550, 866 United Nations Plaza (Alcoa Building), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL

A/SPC/37/SR.14

4 November 1982

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 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. JAMES (Australia) said that international peace and security, co-operation among nations and respect for fundamental social, economic and political rights could be promoted only on the basis of a well-informed world public opinion and the free circulation of comprehensive and diverse information and ideas. There was no inconsistency between the commitment to freedom of expression and the right of each country to seek to develop a distinctive national information and communication system, with its own literature and arts and reflecting particular national ideals and values. Those rights, however, could not be developed through negative or restrictive actions. They could only be safeguarded when a well-informed and critical public was able to exercise the freedom of choice and form an opinion on the basis of all information. His delegation shared the concern expressed by many developing countries which were faced with the urgent need to develop an appropriate information and communication infrastructure in order to bring about a more comprehensive and better-balanced dissemination of ideas and information. His Government, therefore, welcomed the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communication. Australia had agreed to fund the Pacific Radio News Exchange, which was currently being considered by the Council of IPDC and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation. It was hoped that the second medium-term plan of UNESCO would be finalized in an equally constructive manner.

2. Australia strongly supported the Secretary-General and the Department of Public Information in their efforts to develop a co-ordinated and effective information programme, particularly in such important fields as disarmament, the new international economic order and human rights. He commended the Committee on Information for its work during the past year and its success in drafting a consensus report. A number of the recommendations of the Committee on Information could and should be implemented promptly. Others, however, required considerable further study. His delegation supported many of the proposals in recommendation 22 to strengthen the capacity and enhance the role of United Nations information centres. The Information Centre in Australia performed very valuable work and the implementation of some of the recommendations would undoubtedly further enhance its effectiveness. His delegation also welcomed recommendation 19 calling for the continuation of Development Forum and would support appropriate financial arrangements to ensure its future.

(Mr. James, Australia)

3. It was regrettable, nevertheless, in view of the current conditions of financial restraint that the Committee on Information had not given any order of priority identifying the most important recommendations. A more efficient system of inter-agency co-ordination making a greater use of the expertise of UNDP, ITU and UNESCO, for example, might lead to savings and make it possible for those recommendations to be implemented. In that regard, his delegation supported the recommendations concerning the work of the Joint United Nations Information Committee.

4. Mr. KOROSI (Hungary) said that the mass information and communication media had an enormous role to play in promoting better relations among peoples, eliminating backwardness and furthering peaceful co-existence. The rapid progress of mass communication technology made it possible to disseminate information throughout the world and influence the course of national and international events. The task of formulating generally acceptable and workable principles to govern action toward world peace through information was not an easy one. The inclusion of a special chapter on the principle of peace and co-operation in the field of information between States having different social systems in the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe was an important achievement in that regard. The question of how the great potential of the mass media could be used to promote the cause of the peace, international security and mutual understanding among peoples should be the focal point of the current discussion. It was clear that the mass media could serve peaceful ends or be misused to spread discord and be employed as a potent instrument of psychological warfare. In some countries, the mass media were an autonomous political factor and were often linked to political groups of the most reactionary type. Such groups regarded information mainly as a political weapon to be used in the struggle against socialist and developing States. That situation coincided with the dominant position of the Western mass media in the world information system, whose foundations had been laid during the colonial era.

5. Although freedom of information was a sacred principle for all, it must not be used as a pretext for spreading misinformation. Furthermore, it was not an absolute value for all societies and all times. Freedom of information must vary according to the social context in which it operated. His delegation shared the view that the United Nations must use all means at its disposal to prevent the use of the mass media to spread false information or propaganda in favour of war and racial hostility and generally impede international development and aggravate international tension.

6. Hungary supported efforts to formulate and implement legal principles and rules for the establishment of a new world information order on the basis of equality, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, mutual advantage and respect for cultural diversity. Such rules should be based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. The responsibility of the media to contribute to the amelioration of the international situation was particularly important at a time when certain circles were trying to undo what had been achieved through détente and to make confrontation the dominant feature of international relations.

/...

(Mr. Korosi, Hungary)

7. His Government was doing its best to promote the realization of objective and responsible mass communications, in conformity with its foreign policy based on the principles of peaceful co-existence, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the struggle for peace. It condemned any attempt to invoke freedom of the press in order to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries and create tension in international relations. In accordance with its socialist policy, Hungary had prohibited war propaganda, the advocacy of racial hatred and the fomenting of discord among nationalities.

8. The World Mass Media Leaders' Roundtable Conference, held at Budapest in February 1982, had been very useful, because the participants had received precise information on the wide-ranging activities of the Organization from leading United Nations officials. It had been the general view at the Conference that United Nations information and communication activities - not only official public information programmes but also the contributions of the media, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations - could promote a broader public understanding of the work of the Organization. His Government would support initiatives, such as the Budapest Conference, which responded to the needs of the States Members of the Organization. His delegation fully supported the efforts of the Department of Public Information and UNESCO to improve information and mass media activities.

9. Mr. JESUS (Cape Verde) said that his delegation attached particular importance to the agenda item under consideration. A new information and communication order was not only a particular need of the developing countries, but was also in keeping with the aspiration of all peoples for peace and justice. The dissemination of information could no longer remain the powerful tool of a few industrialized countries. Such a situation kept developing countries in an unfavourable position and threatened world peace and security. Co-operation in the field of information between the United Nations system, particularly the Department of Public Information, on the one hand, and the non-aligned countries, through the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and the regional news agencies of developing countries, on the other, was of utmost importance in order to establish an information and communication network responsive to the needs of the developing countries. In that regard, it was particularly gratifying to note the establishment within UNESCO of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which was designed to provide technical assistance and upgrade the communications structures of the developing countries. His delegation supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21). He stressed the importance of providing more information on the economic and social affairs of developing countries. Development Forum was particularly useful in providing such information. It was hoped that more financial support would be forthcoming to finance the continuation of that publication.

10. He drew the attention of the Committee to the note verbale contained in document NV/82/44, which had been circulated by his delegation and which contained the Final Declaration of the Third Summit Conference of Portuguese-speaking African States. Paragraph 10 of that document contained the decision taken by the

(Mr. Jesus, Cape Verde)

Conference that Portuguese should be introduced in international organizations as a working language. He stressed the importance which those five countries attached to the Portuguese-language programmes in the African Unit of the Radio Service of DPI. The Portuguese-language short-wave radio programmes broadcast to Africa should be extended so as to take due account of the needs of the more than 20 million inhabitants of those countries, and more space should be made available in the African Unit for the pre-recorded Portuguese-language programmes sent to the national broadcasting systems of those countries. General Assembly resolution 35/201 had identified the expansion of the African Unit of the Radio Service as a matter of priority. The plan for the expansion of the African Unit had been included in the note submitted by the Secretary-General to the Committee on Information on the strengthening and improvement of the regional structure in the Radio Service of the Department of Public Information, contained in document A/AC.198/35. On the advice of the Secretary-General, however, the plan had been only partially implemented, and the remaining posts described in it had not been filled. He stressed the firm commitment of the five countries in question to the implementation of that plan with regard to the use of the Portuguese language and urged that immediate steps should be taken so that the peoples of those countries could benefit from it.

11. Mr. KIRTON (Guyana) stressed the importance of the role of the information media in bringing about social and political change, accelerating national development, improving educational standards, identifying cultural values and promoting national awareness in developing countries. Unfortunately, the countries which dominated the field of information and communications seemed unwilling to acknowledge that vital role. The developing countries would continue to be the victims of neglect and distorted information until such time as a new international information and communication order was established on the basis of the principles of mutual respect, full recognition of national sovereignty, self-determination and the integrity of national communication systems.

12. He expressed satisfaction at the report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21). Among the useful proposals and recommendations put forward in the report, it was particularly gratifying to note that the Committee, in recommendation 25, stated that the Department of Public Information should further strengthen its co-operation with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies. Such a step would bring about a better balance in the sources of information used by the Department. The practice of joint coverage of important conferences and other events within the United Nations system should be continued and further strengthened. The transfer of communication technology and the training of communication personnel from developing countries was an important prerequisite for the establishment of a new order. Recommendation 40, which stated that the United Nations should aim at the provision of all possible support and assistance to developing countries in that area was very welcome.

13. The decision of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication that priority should be accorded to the professional and technical training of human resources in the areas of research,

/...

(Mr. Kirton, Guyana)

planning, management and technology of communication systems was a practical step toward the establishment of a new order. It was gratifying to note the successful completion of the first in-service Training Programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries. The importance of pursuing all measures designed to increase the experience and expertise available to developing countries could not be over-emphasized.

14. The problems facing the Organization with regard to its public image resulted from the very imbalance and inequality in the flow of information which should be corrected. In that regard, he looked forward to the completion of the JUNIC report on the public perceptions of the United Nations system, and he welcomed the decision of the Committee on Information to review that report. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the establishment of a Caribbean Unit within the Radio Service of DPI. That unit was already providing a vital service to the people of the Caribbean region and helping them to understand better the role of the United Nations in the international community. Implementation of the proposal to have the short-wave broadcasts on a daily basis throughout the year would definitely enhance the work of the radio service.

15. The work of some of the United Nations information centres left much to be desired. In some regions, particularly in the developing world, the information centres had failed to give the necessary level of assistance to the media of the countries in their respective regions. The recommendations of the Committee on Information in that regard were particularly important. His delegation felt that national information officer posts should be created within the information centres in view of the need to recognize and respond to the particular needs of the various regions.

16. Mr. EDEY (Barbados) said that, in Barbados, the right to freedom of opinion and expression was guaranteed to every individual by the Constitution. His country strove to promote respect for that right not only within its national borders but also at the international level.

17. The search for a new world information and communication order was indissociable from the call for a new international economic and social order and, therefore, formed an integral part of the dialogue which the countries of the underdeveloped South must conduct with those of the industrial North. It was thanks to UNESCO that the problem of the information and communication gap between developed and developing countries and its impact on every aspect of individual and national progress and development, was now much more clearly perceived and understood.

18. In his statement before the General Assembly, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Barbados had reiterated his country's concern about the progress towards a new international economic order and its disappointment at the failure of efforts to launch global negotiations. One thing that the developing countries sought of the developed countries was an understanding of their information and communication needs. The models of media practice in the industrialized countries could not

(Mr. Edey, Barbados)

necessarily be successfully imposed on younger and smaller emergent nations and the patterns of media ownership in the developing countries might not be the same as those in the developed countries. There was no reason why the flow of information could not remain free to serve indigenous entertainment and education needs without destroying the developing countries' cultures. The developing countries needed to build up their data banks in order to expand their choice of source material. They also needed adequate training for their journalists so that the latter concentrated on educational rather than sensational reporting. Most of all, journalists in the developed countries must become better informed about the situation in developing countries so that their reporting to their own domestic audiences was balanced, accurate and less biased. Finally, the developing countries needed easier access to communication technology and the necessary financing to that end.

19. That was, in short, the essence of the proposed new information order. If countries had a satisfactory level of economic growth, the opportunities for the operation of a free press would also be enhanced and there would be adequate room for competing mass media. Thus, the call for a new information order must not be interpreted as conflicting with freedom of information. That new order and freedom of information could and should go hand in hand.

20. The fact that 20 per cent of his country's budget was spent on providing free education at all levels was an indication of his Government's attachment to the free dissemination of information. As for the media, the printed press was owned largely by the private sector. The Government owned one each of the radio and television stations but the latter were managed by an independent board recruited from among private individuals. The only limitations on freedom of information and communication were those dictated by the scarcity of data, trained personnel and financial resources.

21. His delegation endorsed fully the 43 recommendations of the Committee on Information. It supported those calling for the establishment of a new information and communication order, in particular recommendation 8. It attached great importance to the work being done by UNESCO and the Joint United Nations Information Committee, as well as to the International Programme for the Development of Communication. As a country in which there was no United Nations information centre, it also supported recommendation 11. It endorsed the appeals for the continuation of the various United Nations publications which disseminated information about the developing nations and within their countries. Within the limits of budgetary constraints, the circulation of the UN Chronicle should be expanded, and recommendations 17 and 19 should be implemented.

22. The United Nations system must not let slip the unique opportunity to take the lead in broadening the base of information available to the developing countries, closing the communication gap between rich and poor and helping to restructure the mass media through multilateral co-operation.

/...

(Mr. Edey, Barbados)

23. His delegation looked forward to the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General in response to recommendation 36 and supported the entire content of that recommendation.

24. His delegation welcomed the recent creation of a separate Caribbean Unit in the Radio Service of DPI. That Unit was currently producing 15-minute programmes in English for broadcasting throughout the Caribbean. The Unit was still understaffed, however, and, when additional staff were recruited, it should be borne in mind that the Unit would be expected to produce programmes in French/Creole and Dutch in addition to English. In that connection, his delegation welcomed recommendation 24. It had been somewhat concerned to learn that, since many staff members recruited in the days when the membership of the United Nations had consisted mainly of developed countries held permanent contracts, improvements in the Organization's geographical composition would take time. He therefore urged the authorities concerned to act with all due speed to implement recommendation 24.

25. DPI must have adequate financing to implement its activities. His delegation would welcome daily United Nations broadcasts to the Caribbean on a year-round basis and believed that the global satellite project held great potential for solving some of the communication problems of that region. His Government, in the meantime, was making its own efforts to improve the domestic information and communication situation in Barbados.

26. Mr. WEEDY (Afghanistan) said that an objective and balanced dissemination of information could play an important role in safeguarding peace and promoting mutual understanding. Nevertheless, the current imbalance between developed and developing countries in the field of information and communication was a cause of major concern for the latter. The backwardness of the mass media in developing countries was the direct result of the long period of colonial domination, which had impeded all aspects of the socio-economic development of those countries. The mass media of the imperialist countries were controlled by a small number of monopolies, which had played a major role in the political arena of the third world. In their lust for world domination the imperialist circles used the information monopolies in order to destabilize progressive Governments and launch malicious propaganda campaigns against sovereign States. Such acts constituted flagrant interference in the internal affairs of States and endangered peace and security throughout the world. The activities of Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and the establishment of Radio Martí were in open defiance of international law. Since the revolution of April 1978, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan had been the object of war propaganda conducted by the Voice of America, BBC, Deutsche Welle and the radio broadcasting companies of some of the reactionary régimes in the region. Such broadcasts were used to create discontent and spread lies against the Afghan revolution. Recently, certain militarist circles, in their quest for world domination, had been advocating such doctrines as "limited nuclear war", "protracted war" and "surprise nuclear attack" in order to convince the public that a nuclear war was unavoidable.

(Mr. Weedy, Afghanistan)

27. Another negative aspect of the broadcasts of the Western information media was the distorted image of life in developing countries, which in turn created further misunderstanding and distrust among peoples. The establishment of a new international information order was more urgent than ever in order to promote international peace and understanding through a free, better balanced and wider dissemination of information. Furthermore, the equitable and just dissemination of information would help efforts to deal with the problems of hunger, disease, illiteracy, racial discrimination, apartheid and the threat of nuclear war.

28. With regard to the activities of the Department of Public Information, his delegation felt that further improvements could be made particularly with respect to the provision of unbiased coverage of liberation movements. In that regard the plight of the Palestinian people should be adequately reflected. It was gratifying to note that efforts were being made to redress the existing geographical imbalance in the staff of DPI. His delegation supported the Department's Training Programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and felt that that programme should be expanded. Lastly, he expressed support for the efforts of DPI to reflect the image of the United Nations in the positive manner which it deserved.

29. Miss KOUYOKILA-SOUMINA (Congo) observed that the resources available to DPI were not always commensurate with the activities it was expected to carry out.

30. The countries of the third world were daily exposed to the damage done by the biased press of the industrialized countries, which had a monopoly of information and communication systems. It was high time that developed and developing countries alike realized that a just and equitable information system would contribute to peaceful co-existence among peoples and remove the artificial barriers between individuals.

31. The argument that was always invoked to delay the establishment of a new international information order was that such an order precluded freedom of the press. That was not so: the new order and freedom of the press were totally compatible. The political and technical aspects of the establishment of that order must not obscure its fundamental objective, namely the democratization of information. Such democratization involved decentralizing existing information structures and offering the benefits of communication to the largest possible number of people so as to bring nations and individuals closer together.

32. In times of crisis and tension, the information media played a particularly decisive role. The function of the press must therefore be redefined. Freedom of the press was and remained a fundamental human right that could not be tampered with. That right was guaranteed by the Constitution of the Congo, where all newspapers entered and circulated freely. Her country would preserve that right, while welcoming any constructive proposal to make the press play a more positive role in the dissemination of the ideals of peace and of the struggle against racism, apartheid and foreign domination. The latter objective could in no way be regarded as an infringement of freedom, unless freedom meant simply allowing imperialism free reign in the political, educational and cultural fields. Neither

/...

(Miss Kouyokila-Soumina, Congo)

the Committee on Information nor the General Assembly or UNESCO needed to take lessons from any school of thought, least of all from the proponents of the laissez-faire doctrine so dear to those who advocated freedom for the major transnational monopolies. With regard to the report of the Committee on Information, her delegation welcomed the proposal to set up a United Nations information centre at Brazzaville in 1983. That centre would help her country not only to familiarize its public with the activities of the United Nations but also to promote the activities of governmental and non-governmental organizations working for peace, co-operation and international harmony. United Nations programmes and activities, including those devoted to popular liberation struggles and their need for support, were already widely publicized by the Congolese radio and press. The Voice of SWAPO was broadcast regularly from Brazzaville, while Soweto Day was celebrated annually.

33. Her delegation hoped that the establishment of the Brazzaville information centre would mark the beginning of a new era of fruitful co-operation between DPI and the Congolese News Agency. Her Government would co-operate fully with DPI in promoting the broadcasting of United Nations radio programmes on Congolese radio and was ready to launch a pilot programme to that end. Congolese radio was planning to transmit those broadcasts on medium wave and possibly short wave, so as to increase the dissemination of information from United Nations Headquarters. At the same time, it was giving the southern African liberation movement's access to its radio channels for their broadcasts to South Africa.

34. In order to reinforce the efforts of the United Nations Radio Service to broadcast and rebroadcast its programmes, her delegation appealed to all Member States, particularly those with United Nations information centres to set aside radio and television time for United Nations broadcasts. In particular, negotiations should be undertaken with a view to ensuring that the United Nations information centres in Washington, London, Paris, Geneva and Vienna could permanently rebroadcast United Nations radio programmes in collaboration with their host countries, thereby contributing to public knowledge of the United Nations and its activities.

35. Her delegation endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on Information. It none the less wished to draw the Secretary-General's attention to recommendation 28, which it appreciated deeply. Like all the African States Members of the United Nations, the Congo had always appreciated the part played by the African Unit of the Radio Service in serving approximately 50 African States and several African regional and national radio broadcasting networks. Her delegation therefore hoped that all the provisions contained in document A/AC.198/35 would be implemented effectively and that the African Unit would be expanded so that it could cover the needs of the African countries more fully.

36. Mr. URBINA (Costa Rica) said that it was his delegation's conviction that a new world information and communication order was a prerequisite for the establishment of a more just international order in which all peoples could achieve

(Mr. Urbina, Costa Rica)

well-being while reaffirming their national and cultural identity. At the same time, Costa Rica attached particular importance to the production of information which would enable all peoples to learn about the important work being done by the United Nations. Unfortunately, the information which was currently being disseminated on the work of the Organization and on which the latter's international image was based was inadequate and distorted. As the representative of an underdeveloped country, he could vouch for the fact that vast sectors of the population of such countries were totally ignorant of United Nations activities. Such ignorance was the result of inadequate information, compounded by lack of interest on the part of the world's major information monopolies, which contented themselves with reporting on daily events rather than considering the work of the United Nations system in depth. Thus, the patterns of domination which characterized international relations were present also in the field of information. Transnational corporations in the field of information defended dominant interests, distorting the image of the United Nations and ignoring the efforts that it made to guarantee a better future for generations to come.

37. Distorted and inadequate information on the United Nations was to blame for the fact that the recent announcement by a great Power that it might withdraw from the Organization had been greeted with scepticism and indifference by international public opinion. Only ignorance could explain why thousands of millions of peoples should not be alarmed at the prospect of losing an organization of such value to mankind.

38. His delegation therefore warmly welcomed the proposals for restoring the image of the United Nations. It supported the various recommendations of the Committee on Information aimed at strengthening the United Nations information centres, in particular recommendation 22. It endorsed recommendation 25 and the appeal for better co-ordination and use of DPI resources and increased co-operation between the information services of the United Nations system.

39. His delegation endorsed recommendation 36 in the firm belief that the United Nations must have its own communications satellite. At the same time, it regretted that those countries which had the necessary technology and earmarked vast sums of money for the exploration and military use of outer space had not seen fit to offer to provide the United Nations with its own satellite. Such generous co-operation would benefit mankind and help to project a proper image of the Organization.

40. His country attached particular importance to the contribution which information and communication could make to the overall development of peoples and, therefore, welcomed the fact that the recommendations of the Committee on Information had been adopted by consensus. Its own concerns in that field were reflected by Costa Rica's close co-operation with UNESCO. UNESCO was helping Costa Rica to set up a national system of information for development, and his Government had recently set up a Secretariat for Information and Communication. Costa Rica's national system of state radio and television and the State Open University, established in co-operation with the Government of Spain, showed the degree of priority which his Government attached to the use of information and communication for development.

/...

(Mr. Urbina, Costa Rica)

41. His delegation was firmly convinced that international co-operation in the field of information and communication must include the creation of information and communication infrastructures and the training of information and communication professionals to help disseminate information which promoted production, health and culture, while respecting the national and cultural identities of peoples. It was also convinced that the United Nations was in a position to appeal to the mass media to contribute to countries' development process by co-operating in the overall advancement of their peoples and creating a favourable climate of opinion to that end. In that connection, concerted action must be taken to promote the World Disarmament Campaign: the information media must help to create a climate of understanding, trust and co-operation which would lead to disarmament and release much needed resources for development.

42. Costa Rica's democratic tradition and respect for human rights meant that it attached particular importance to the free circulation of information. The new international information order must guarantee not only greater justice but also the possibility for all peoples to exercise fully their right to freedom of thought, expression and information. Freedom of information must not, however, be used by the developed countries to create new patterns of domination which threatened the interests of the third world. International organizations had a vital part to play in safeguarding the interests and cultural identity of peoples, as well as their ideological and political options. The new information order must also guarantee a new balance in international communication flows. The underdeveloped countries could not be condemned to remain mere receivers of information; they must also be able to inform the world about the tremendous efforts they were making to overcome their disadvantaged position.

43. Costa Rica endorsed fully the work and recommendations of the Committee on Information, supported the International Programme for the Development of Communication, in particular the regional projects envisaged under that Programme, and was fully satisfied with the work of all the organs which had submitted reports under item 67.

44. Mr. MEVS (Haiti) said that his delegation shared the fears expressed by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information about the distorted image of the United Nations increasingly being disseminated by the news media. However, his delegation welcomed the prospects for effective co-operation with UNESCO which was directed towards strengthening the information infrastructures of the developing countries and which would clearly help to establish a new world information order.

45. The slogan "new international economic order", repeated so frequently in recent years by those concerned about the future of the international community, particularly that of the developing countries, was both a reflection of the concerns of those responsible for seeking the general well-being of peoples and a catch-phrase repeated by others rhetorically to conceal their lack of interest in the subject or to ease their conscience. However, that concept was too serious and too important to be flaunted and distorted by the media.

(Mr. Mevs, Haiti)

46. The developing countries were calling for a new world information order, together with the new international economic order, because harmonious economic and social development required sound, rational, constructive, impartial and truthful information, which took into account the social and cultural situation of every State and respected the differences that existed. Information was a vehicle for development, and, if disseminated properly, it could serve communication between the developed and the developing societies. Therefore, information could stimulate the development of the third-world countries and, at the same time, could serve international peace; it did not need to be the perverse, destructive instrument which it became in the hands of transnational corporations. However, he stressed that insufficient information was frequently as harmful as the lack of information or information used for destructive purposes.

47. His delegation welcomed the establishment within the Department of Public Information of the Caribbean Unit, which would surely help to disseminate relevant information among the States concerned. However, his delegation regretted the fact that the Unit would not serve the French-speaking and Creole-speaking countries of the region, and, despite the understandable difficulties encountered in instituting such a service, he expressed the hope that broadcasts in French and Creole would soon be included in the Caribbean Unit's broadcasts. His delegation was also convinced that the efforts made to that end should be expanded so as to correct the imbalance in the service provided by United Nations Radio, and he assured the Under-Secretary-General of his delegation's complete co-operation in that regard.

48. Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia) drew attention to the fact that a Colombian journalist, Gabriel García Márquez, had recently received the Nobel Prize for Literature, an award which represented also a tribute to journalism in the third world. He observed that Mr. García Márquez had been a member of the McBride Commission, a necessary, albeit controversial, body dealing with contemporary communication and information. Mr. García Márquez, had penned recommendations calling for the establishment of more democratic communication structures, which should be a national and international requirement for peoples throughout the world. He had drawn attention to the need to discuss communication within a general, political, economic and cultural context, because communication could not be reduced merely to information. Moreover, according to the Nobel prizewinner, the technological solutions to contemporary communication problems should not be glorified, because the promises of technology entailed political and social consequences. It was also necessary to find the will to develop the third world's communication infrastructures, without exaggerating their importance, because solving current problems in that field was more than a matter of money and training.

49. The problem of information was political, social, cultural and, above all, humanistic in nature. Accordingly, he supported the warnings issued by previous speakers about the danger inherent in new information technologies, which were used only to strengthen existing monopolies and to widen the already tragic gap separating the advanced countries from those striving to find their own identity.

/...

(Mr. Rodríguez Medina, Colombia)

50. From the outset, the work of the Committee on Information had been directed towards ensuring that the United Nations, and in particular the Department of Public Information, became a channel for the aspirations of the developing world. The current crisis was one of misinformation, misinformation of world public opinion about the true work of the United Nations, misinformation of public opinion in the major Powers about the real progress made in solving the problems affecting peripheral areas of the world and misinformation of public opinion in the developing countries about the aspirations and opinions of other peoples like themselves.

51. It was a great challenge for the Department of Public Information to transmit messages that would neutralize all that misinformation. Colombia viewed the United Nations as an instrument that could disseminate information about the real struggles of the peoples of the developing countries against poverty, illiteracy, endemic diseases, economic protectionism, as well as about their achievements.

52. In that connection, the new world information order must sincerely respect the truth and the dignity of the human person, both of which must no longer be dealt with as worthless material in international news processing; their importance was illustrated by the events in southern Africa, Central America, the Malvinas Islands and Lebanon, among others.

53. There could be no lasting peace so long as the major demand was for news about war; there could be no security so long as violence and terrorism made the most exciting headlines; there could be no understanding so long as the words of statesmen were distorted for the sake of convenience and so long as the image of third-world culture was grotesquely distorted; there could be no development so long as news about the developing countries was not given priority among editors in the industrialized countries. Above all, there could be no secure future for the peoples of the developing countries so long as tendentious interests continued to regard them contemptuously merely as material for articles on revolutions, illegal activities, social chaos and economic ruin, while failing to mention the fact that, elsewhere, others were deliberately fueling those situations with huge shipments of weapons, funds and manpower.

54. Therefore, the people of the developing countries placed their hopes in the United Nations as the only organization that could help to improve such a deplorable state of affairs. The press in developing countries sought to describe the efforts made to promote development and to establish community priorities. However, the international press persisted in misrepresenting those efforts. In that connection, the United Nations and its information services could make a major contribution to the task of disseminating the truth, for the benefit of all: for the developing countries, of course, but also for the developed countries, which would, at last, understand the developing countries better and would appreciate their efforts, identity and common affinities. With information centres directed by highly qualified professionals and supplied with up-to-date material of general interest to national audiences, the United Nations could become a source of relevant news for the world media.

(Mr. Rodríguez Medina, Colombia)

55. Accordingly, he welcomed the activities of the Department of Public Information in fields such as radio and television, which showed that it had the equipment and the dedicated staff necessary to meet its challenges successfully. If the United Nations was to be technologically independent and to work in the service of all, particularly the weak and the needy, it must be provided with its own satellite system, which would give it its own administrative operational capacity with regard to editorial, translation and conference services.

56. By shedding light on the major problems arising from economic, political, cultural and sociological confrontation, as well as from military confrontation, the Department of Public Information could help to ensure that better solutions were found to those problems. Although journalism could not change the world, it was duty-bound to seek to improve it.

57. Mr. HOUNGAVOU (Benin) said that information was of fundamental importance for development and that without it no planning was possible, no coherent action could be undertaken and no overall policy could be elaborated or implemented. Those truths were worth repeating in order to give forceful expression once again to a systematic rejection of the present world information order characterized by the unrelenting domination of the all-powerful media cartels of the northern hemisphere which exercised undivided supremacy over information at all stages. That situation represented an unacceptable disequilibrium between North and South, a political means of perpetuating imperialist, colonialist and racist domination, a weapon against the independence of nations and a dangerous system which could fabricate news in order to destabilize countries or régimes whose political choices threatened imperialist interests. Campaigns of deception and defamation through radio broadcasts aimed at the populations of countries whose political orientation was not to the liking of international imperialism were to be condemned. Such practices militated against peaceful co-existence, collective security and the principles of the Charter. The establishment of a new information order on a sound basis was therefore a just cause for which Benin and all other countries of the third world could strive with honesty and open minds, so that information, a common heritage of mankind, could be freed from its enslavement to the power of money and international imperialism. His delegation had taken note with great satisfaction of the unanimous commitment on the part of the developing countries to ensuring that the desired changes took place through negotiations and dialogue. The democratization of international relations necessarily involved the establishment of a new world information order. The entire United Nations system had an important role to play as the indispensable framework for the interplay and co-existence of often violently opposed ideas. In its close involvement in the work of the Committee on Information, Benin had sought to show its readiness to engage in that dialogue.

58. His delegation firmly supported the 43 new recommendations of the Committee on Information which had emanated from its 1982 substantive session. It felt that recommendations 3 to 8 contained positive elements for movement towards a new information order. Not all of them reflected the position of Benin on the new order, but in a spirit of dialogue, his delegation associated itself with that minimum formulation, while hoping that the information organs which presently dominated the situation would understand the full extent of its spirit of compromise and its openness to democratic and free discussion.

/...

(Mr. Houngavou, Benin)

59. His delegation supported recommendations 9 to 20 on the evaluation of the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications. The establishment of a new world information order necessarily involved co-operation and technical assistance in training and the transfer of technology. IPDC should receive all the necessary financial support for the implementation of the important regional and interregional projects approved by its Council for Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. The activities of UNESCO and of its officials for the promotion of a new world information order through IPDC should be supported. The calumny of which UNESCO was often the object in certain imperialist circles and in the international press should cease forthwith. The training programme for journalists and broadcasters had been a good experiment, but it was only a minimum and the United Nations should institute a coherent programme for co-operation and technical assistance in the training of radio and television technicians. The Committee should seriously consider extending the programme and should invite the General Assembly to make available the funds necessary for its implementation.

60. Concerning recommendations 21 to 43 on United Nations public information policies and activities, his delegation felt a certain amount of satisfaction in the progress made in bringing about the necessary changes in the structure of DPI. The task of reform was nevertheless immense, and the demands that all the recommendations of the Committee should be implemented were legitimate. The tendency to suspend the implementation of certain recommendations should be avoided.

61. The work of the United Nations should centre on co-operation and technical assistance to create or strengthen information infrastructures in the developing countries. The ongoing co-operation between DPI and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies was a positive example of that kind of assistance and Benin hoped that it would be developed and further strengthened. Benin wished to see an increase in special dispatches from the DPI information services since they were much used by its media.

62. The participation of international news organizations in the dissemination of objective information on development efforts was of great importance. The Chairman of the Committee on Information had launched a solemn appeal to the international news organizations for such objective information on the efforts of young nations for development. In that context, his delegation would like to take the present occasion to inform those news organizations that, at the beginning of 1983, Benin would, in collaboration with UNDP, hold a round table of its socio-economic development partners on the implementation of the projects of the programme for the decade 1980-1990. Benin counted on the disinterested co-operation of its friends for the financing of that programme, which would mark a turning-point in its economic development.

63. The way to the establishment of a new world information order was not always paved with good intentions but, taking account of the interests of all parties, it should be possible, with honesty and fairness, to achieve some degree of success.

64. Mrs. COLMANT (Honduras) said that the report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21) contained many of the rules recommended by the Latin American countries in connection with the use of information as an active tool to promote peace and strengthen the basic principles of the United Nations. Those principles included, inter alia, freedom of information and of opinion, freedom of the press, respect for human rights and development for the benefit of all peoples. Accordingly, her delegation agreed with most of the recommendations contained in the report.

65. Referring to the statement made previously by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, she agreed that the Department of Public Information had an increasingly important task in view of the influence that technological progress exerted on the lives of every individual and in view of the possibilities of using such progress to improve the living conditions of peoples, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The way in which communication and information were used would largely determine the success of both development programmes and of United Nations efforts to maintain international peace and security. In that regard, her delegation felt that it was very important to explore the ways in which the modern communication media could be used to help the large, primarily rural, areas of the world which were still excluded from the benefits of scientific and technological progress. Improving the living conditions in rural areas was essential for the economic recovery of the people concerned and for that of the world as a whole. Her delegation attached great importance to UNESCO's activities in providing educational radio broadcasts to rural areas and felt that those activities should be reinforced through assistance from DPI, in close co-operation with other specialized agencies and with the direct participation of the local radio stations concerned. While helping to educate the inhabitants of rural areas, those activities would also increase public knowledge about the activities of the United Nations.

66. However, efforts to eliminate ignorance and illiteracy must encompass problems related to health, water supply, food production and land use, in short, the implementation of the social and economic development programmes of each of the countries concerned. Some of the recommendations contained in the report, in particular recommendation 40, reflected her delegation's views in that respect.

67. She also drew attention to the problem created by short-wave broadcasts transmitted from the great Powers to the developing countries or from one developing country to another, which, on occasion, led to conflicts such as that currently being discussed by the Committee.

68. With regard to the use of communication satellites and advances in the field of communication in general, her delegation advocated multilateral action, supervised by the United Nations designed to ensure that satellites were used to benefit the developing countries, for purposes of recreation, education and economic and social training and for the promotion of peace and friendship among peoples. In that context, it was also important to guarantee the right of peoples to their own culture, traditions and customs, including those of subregions and of indigenous populations such as the Indians of South, Central and North America.

(Mrs. Colmant, Honduras)

69. In conclusion, she welcomed the fact that the Department of Public Information was broadcasting programmes in Spanish to Latin America, Spain and Equatorial Guinea. Her delegation trusted that that service would succeed in giving Spanish its proper place in relation to the other official languages.

70. Mr. DAVID (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, observed that the comments made by the representative of Argentina in his statement on 26 October had little relevance to the agenda item under consideration. His Government's views on that matter had already been brought to the attention of the Security Council in a letter addressed by the representative of the United Kingdom to the President of the Security Council on 21 June, which had been circulated as a document of the Security Council.

71. The United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the South Sandwich Islands, including Southern Thule. In 1976, the Argentine Government had opened a station on Southern Thule without proper authorization from the British Government, in a deliberately provocative move against which his Government had vigorously protested. The two Governments had been in negotiation with one another at that time, although Argentina had broken off negotiations and had invaded the Falkland Islands and South Georgia in April 1982. His Government had been forced to exercise its right of self-defence in order to end the illegal Argentine occupation and to resume control over Southern Thule. In so doing, it had found no evidence that the illegal Argentine station there had been used exclusively for scientific purposes, as had been claimed, and it was curious to note that, according to an Argentine joint staff communiqué, the head of the base had ordered the destruction of the communication equipment and codes when he had become aware of the British presence on Southern Thule.

72. Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) said that the number of delegations that had participated in the discussion of agenda item 67 had demonstrated the importance accorded to the subject by Member States. The debate had been characterized by a conceptual approach to basic issues and a practical understanding of the tasks and problems of the Department of Public Information. In the context of the increasing tension in international relations, the critical role of information had been clearly recognized and emphasized in the statements of almost all delegations. Mass media reports reached every part of the world, influenced perceptions and images and affected attitudes towards issues concerning relations among nations. Objectivity in portraying developments and interpreting their significance and a balanced flow of information among countries were therefore the basic concerns that underlay the concept of a new world information and communication order. The growing recognition of the impact of information on peace, development and international co-operation was a major factor underlying the emerging consensus on a new information order, and the deliberations of the Committee played an important role in advancing that consensus.

73. The new information order would take shape in the General Assembly and also through the activities of UNESCO, with which DPI had worked in close co-operation within the framework of their respective legislative mandates. The support

(Mr. Akashi)

expressed in the Committee for the International Programme for the Development of Communication was a recognition of the positive contributions made by UNESCO towards the practical implementation of the new order. There was a concerted effort on the part of the United Nations and UNESCO to minimize duplication in their activities and to make them as complementary as possible.

74. The support expressed by a number of delegations for the efforts of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) to intensify the co-ordination of information activities at the operational level among all agencies and programmes of the United Nations system was appreciated. One of the primary concerns of JUNIC over the past year had been the question of public perceptions of the United Nations system, and it had prepared a report on that matter for the consideration of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC/1982/22). Since press reports had portrayed it in a selective and somewhat arbitrary manner, delegations should read the report in full and consider all the points made there in their proper context. Selective quotations from the report did not do justice to those who had toiled on it for over a year, motivated solely by a concern to project a true image of the United Nations to the peoples of the world.

75. The question of geographic balance in the personnel of DPI must continue to be viewed in the context of geographical distribution in the Secretariat as a whole, a matter on which the Secretary-General submitted annual reports to the General Assembly for the consideration of the Fifth Committee. Given the concern expressed by members of the Committee on Information, however, progress in achieving geographical balance within DPI was regularly reported to that Committee. The position as it pertained to senior posts was slowly changing in favour of the developing countries and the Department was confident that that trend would continue until a satisfactory balance had been achieved. In the process, it would of course be mindful of the integrity, competence and efficiency of staff members which were so vital to its work.

76. The recognition given by a large number of delegations to the importance of the United Nations information centres and of their strengthening was greatly appreciated. Subject to the approval of the General Assembly, DPI would establish new centres in Angola and the Congo during 1983, in response to requests from their Governments. In accordance with the recommendation of the Committee on Information, which seemed to enjoy a large measure of support in the Special Political Committee, DPI had been working with the Office of Financial Services and the Office of Personnel Services to review the levels of the directors of some of the centres so that those with large or complex jurisdictions could be headed by directors with the necessary seniority and expertise. Concerning the appointment of nationals as directors of information centres in their own countries, a matter on which the representative of Portugal had expressed concern, that was done only in exceptional cases where the advantages of such an appointment were considered to outweigh the disadvantages.

/...

(Mr. Akashi)

77. The strong support from many delegations for the continued publication of Development Forum was deeply appreciated. Members of the Committee were perhaps not fully aware of the constant pressure of financial uncertainty under which publication was carried out. With the exception of Japan, which contributed through the Division for Economic and Social Information Trust Fund, the traditional donor countries would discontinue their contributions to Development Forum starting in 1983. That situation, together with the fact that income from agencies in the United Nations system was stagnant or decreasing, had created a crisis requiring emergency measures to save the only inter-agency publication of the United Nations system on economic and social matters. It was hoped that Governments and the agencies concerned would come to its rescue. Funds for such purposes were included in the United Nations regular budget, but without corresponding support from other agencies it might not be possible to continue publication. Delegations to the Committee should bear in mind their concerns on that question and consider the need for consistency of attitude in the forums of the specialized agencies.

78. The support expressed by many delegations for co-operation between DPI and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and regional news agencies in the developing countries had been gratifying. DPI had every intention of furthering and expanding that co-operation.

79. The recognition of the value of UN Chronicle was also very welcome and it was to be hoped that its new content and format would enhance that value. It had for long been a useful publication for both the general public and scholars. DPI intended to ensure its publication in all official languages from 1983 onwards if modest additional resources were made available.

80. The Yearbook of the United Nations was also of great importance as a basic record of the activities of the United Nations, and its value to libraries, universities and scholars had often been recognized. Its publication had, unfortunately, been steadily falling behind, but it would be a major priority of DPI to try to achieve the target of publishing it within 18 months of the year covered, as had been recommended by the Committee on Information in the past.

81. A number of delegations had referred to the need to examine the feasibility of a United Nations satellite system, and the Committee on Information had already recommended a detailed study on that proposal. That study would be conducted by the Office of General Services with the close involvement of DPI. All aspects of the project would be carefully examined and the advantages and disadvantages weighed so that sound recommendations could be reached.

82. Several delegations had raised questions regarding the inclusion of regional languages among those used in DPI radio programmes. With regard to Chinese, there was already a weekly news magazine in that language which included in-depth features. DPI had proposed to initiate a weekly television news programme in Chinese to be transmitted by satellite and it was hoped that that could be started by 1984. In the case of conferences and meetings away from Headquarters, DPI regularly attempted to ensure coverage in Chinese, but, owing to budgetary

(Mr. Akashi)

limitations, such coverage sometimes had to be curtailed. DPI hoped that, if the necessary budgetary resources were allocated, the German language could be added to those already used in DPI radio programmes. Similar considerations would apply to production in Malay, Nepali and Lingala. Programmes in Portuguese were already regularly produced and transmitted to both Brazil and Africa.

83. On the question of the regionalization of the Visual Services of the Radio and Visual Services Division of DPI, it would be best at the present stage simply to recall that the Committee on Information had requested a new study on that controversial issue and to assure all delegations that the study would be available for the next session of that Committee.

84. The Committee on Information had recommended in 1982 that DPI should undertake a survey to ascertain potential interest in receiving a weekly United Nations programme via satellite, and a report on that subject had been presented to the Committee on Information (A/AC.198/52). Accordingly, weekly television magazines were produced in Arabic, French and Spanish and had been broadcast by satellite since the beginning of the thirty-seventh session. The Arabic programme was transmitted to Arabic-speaking countries by way of the satellite of the European Broadcasters Union and was thus able to reach many more countries than had been reached by the previous programmes, which had been sent to the countries concerned by air freight, arriving 10 to 15 days after the event. The new programmes were limited to five minutes because of time restrictions on television news bulletins, the timing of satellite transmissions and considerations of cost. DPI considered it inadvisable to produce lengthy news programmes that could not be transmitted in their entirety and that would either have to be severely cut or sent by air freight with concomitant delays.

85. With regard to the comment made on the evaluation of the productivity of the various regional radio units, it should be made clear that the productivity study dealt only with radio programmes and that the time allocated by the Arabic Unit for producing visual programmes had been fully taken into account.

86. A number of delegations had referred to the coverage given by DPI to the question of Palestine and had made particular mention of the three seminars on the subject under the auspices of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Obviously, the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East were high on the list of the Department's priorities, since they were among the most important issues before the Organization. Given the limited resources available, the Department's coverage of events concerning the Palestine issue had been adequate, and it was not correct to say that DPI had been remiss in that regard. A major film and a widely acclaimed poster had been produced; the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was fully covered every year; a semi-permanent exhibit on the Palestine issue had been installed; DPI co-operated with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People every year to set up temporary exhibits and had produced a booklet on that Committee; television and radio programmes covered relevant developments; and meetings of non-governmental organizations were briefed

/...

(Mr. Akashi)

on the issue of Palestine. The three seminars concerned had been covered in exactly the same way as seminars on other subjects, and it should be borne in mind that seminars in general were not covered by outside media as news events. Normal practice had been observed, and United Nations radio programmes had covered the seminars. DPI had made special efforts to project the resumed seventh emergency special session of the General Assembly so as to ensure coverage in the press and on television and radio. DPI was also working closely with the secretariat of the International Conference on Palestine with a view to meeting the public information requirements of the Conference fully.

87. Several delegations had called for more publicity to be given to the achievements of the United Nations in economic and social fields. That was the task assigned to the Division for Economic and Social Information within DPI, and the Division was structured in such a way as to serve events such as special years or major conferences. The General Assembly normally provided separate funding for information services in connection with such events. The Division did not have the funding to publicize United Nations activities in economic and social fields in a more satisfactory manner, although it did its best within the resources available.

88. Concerning the Department as a whole, many delegations had expressed concern that DPI should maximize the effective utilization of its resources. That was indeed one of its highest priorities and would remain so. Several delegations had mentioned the need for continuous and systematic evaluation of the priorities and activities of DPI, and it was concentrating on developing evaluation procedures for that purpose.

89. The delegations of Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany had expressed interest in ensuring that the German-language information service in the United Nations Office at Vienna should be adequately staffed and provided with sufficient resources. DPI had already drawn up plans and proposals in that regard. The problem might become particularly acute after UNIDO became a specialized agency and its solution should therefore not be delayed.

90. In reply to the representative of Austria who had expressed doubts on the usefulness of the oral history project, the purpose of that project was not to duplicate what was already well-documented but to supplement existing materials by preserving the personal recollections of people who had played a significant part in the work of the United Nations which would otherwise be lost forever. It was pleasing to note that several delegations had expressed strong support for the project

91. The interest and support aroused by the training programme for young journalists and broadcasters from developing countries had been gratifying. The programme for 1982 had recently been completed, and the testimony of the participants that they had benefited immeasurably from their diverse experiences at Headquarters had been moving.

(Mr. Akashi)

92. DPI was grateful to the Committee for the close attention that it had paid to the Department. The staff of the Department would rededicate itself to implementing the difficult and often frustrating tasks which were its lot but which were aimed at furthering the ideals and principles of the United Nations to which all were deeply attached.

93. Mr. CORTI (Argentina), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the fact that the representative of the United Kingdom had responded to his statement more than one week after he had delivered it and in so doing had raised only uncertain, ambiguous points was more than eloquent. In drawing attention to the criminal act committed by the United Kingdom, which had been condemned by the international community, he had cited specific dates, documents and organizations which attested to the lawful status of the Argentine base in the South Sandwich Islands. He had also referred specifically to a recommendation of the World Conference on Cultural Policies. However, the representative of the United Kingdom had only made a vague reference to the British Government's protests. To his knowledge, the only protest had been its armed invasion of Argentine territory, the restoration of an aberrant colonial situation and the interruption of a system providing extremely useful scientific data to the international community as a whole. That entire situation revealed the colonialist attitude of an extra-continental Power whose greed and barbarism could be seen in the numerous wars of independence its persistent presence had provoked and in the repeated acts of aggression it had committed throughout history.

94. Mr. ADHAMI (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information avoided the substance of what his delegation had said in connection with the Arabic-language service and the radio and television programmes broadcast in Arabic. He reiterated that technical and professional considerations could not, in his delegation's opinion, justify the new programmes currently being broadcast. Clearly, the administration wished to continue to broadcast programmes that were contrary to the recommendations of the Committee on Information. He suggested that the administration should provide samples of the new radio and television programmes presented in application of the new directives, together with samples of previous programmes, so that the Committee could then judge, honestly and objectively, whether or not his delegation's allegations were founded. For example, the Under-Secretary-General had indicated that the new programmes were being broadcast by satellite. However, he himself knew for a fact that such programmes were first shipped by air freight to Rome and were then broadcast by satellite from there. As a result, the news was at least five days old by the time it reached its audience.

95. The CHAIRMAN observed that the Committee had thus concluded the general debate on agenda item 67 and would consider draft resolutions relating to that item at a later date.

/...

AGENDA ITEM 104: PROGRAMME PLANNING

(b) MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1984-1989 (A/SPC/37/L.2)

96. The CHAIRMAN reminded members of the Committee that, in the letter contained in document A/SPC/37/L.2, the Chairman of the Fifth Committee had requested the Committee to submit any views it might have on the medium-term plan no later than the first week of November. Accordingly, he suggested that any views members might wish to convey should be submitted in writing no later than 2 November, for transmission to the Fifth Committee as requested.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.