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Item 53 of the provisional agenda*

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The subitem entitled "Freedom of information" concerns the draft Convention on Freedom of Information, which has been on the agenda of the General Assembly since its fourteenth session, and the draft Declaration on Freedom of Information, which has been on the Assembly's agenda since its fifteenth session.
2. At its thirty-third session, the General Assembly had before it a note by the Secretary-General which contained a summary of the previous consideration of the item by United Nations organs (A/33/240).
3. At the 87th meeting, on 18 December 1978, the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Special Political Committee, adopted decision 33/425 in which it decided, in view of the fact that agenda item 77 (b), entitled "Freedom of information", had not been substantively considered at the thirty-third session and that no specific resolution pertaining thereto had been introduced, to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-fourth session the item entitled:

"Freedom of information:

"(a) Draft Declaration on Freedom of Information;

"(b) Draft Convention on Freedom of Information".
4. Under Economic and Social Council resolutions 1074 C (XXXIX) of 28 July 1965 and 1596 (L) of 21 May 1971, the Ad Hoc Committee on Periodic Reports is entrusted with the task of studying and evaluating the reports and other information received and of submitting to the Commission on Human Rights its comments, conclusions and recommendations.
5. By its resolution 15 (XXXV) of 14 March 1979, the Commission on Human Rights decided to postpone consideration of the Periodic Reports on Freedom of Information to its thirty-sixth session in 1980.

* A/34/150.

6. At its twentieth session in 1978, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization had before it, inter alia, the interim report prepared by the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (20 C/94). The report is divided into two separate parts: part I contains a factual record of the proceedings of the Commission and part II an outline of the problems which arose, or are likely to arise, in the course of the work of the Commission. The Commission hopes to obtain many comments, observations and suggestions concerning the content of the report, in order to facilitate preparation of the final report.

7. At the same session, the General Conference also had before it a text of a Draft Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War (20 C/20 Rev.). The text, which was a compromise version proposed by the Director-General, was adopted by consensus by the Conference. The articles of the Draft Declaration deal, inter alia, with matters such as a free flow and a wider and better balanced dissemination of information; the exercise of freedom of opinion; access by the public to information; assured protection of journalists; the role of the mass media in contributing effectively to promote human rights; the contribution of the mass media in strengthening international understanding; dissemination of information to promote the reduction of international tension; the part played by the media in the education of young people; the reflection of all points of view; inequalities in the flow of information to and from developing countries; disseminating more widely the objectives and principles universally accepted; importance of the Declaration in pertinent codes of ethics.
