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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUBAREZ (Yemen)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 67: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION:

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

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Co-ordination in the field of public information activities among the members of the United Nations system" (A/36/218) and to the comments thereon of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination contained in document A/37/174. He also recalled that chapter 9 of the proposed medium-term plan (A/37/6) dealt with the question of information.

2. Mr. AKASHI (Under Secretary-General for Public Information)\* said that, in his annual report on the work of the Organization (A/37/1), the Secretary-General had described the state of international relations as being perilously near to international anarchy. Commenting on the concomitant erosion of the authority of international institutions, he had stressed that the United Nations had been created specifically to turn mankind away from a self-destructive course and to prevent an unprecedented catastrophe. While the Secretary-General had expressed particular concern at the way that Governments used, or did not use, the instruments provided by the Organization, it should be recalled that the authority of the United Nations and consequently its effectiveness - was strongly influenced by the climate of public opinion in Member States and that that, in turn, was affected by the Organization's image in the minds of the peoples of the world. It was a fact that the mass media in a number of countries were presenting a negative image of the United Nations system.

3. Numerous reasons could be adduced for those trends - disillusionment subsequent to the unrealistically high aspirations created following the Second World War, lack of unanimity among the Permanent Members of the Security Council and the emergence of the third world countries in the international arena. There had developed a disquieting gap between the ever-increasing value of the United Nations as an indispensable instrument for international peace and co-operation and the simplified, emotional and sometimes unfair image drawn in some sectors of the media, not only of its activities, but even of its motivations.

4. That problem had been a major concern of the Committee on Information. Even before the present session, the Joint United Nations Information Committee had been

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\* The full text of this statement will be issued as document A/SPC/37/PV.6.

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focusing on the issue and had prepared an analytical paper on public perceptions of the United Nations system; the paper was to be presented to the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) the following month. Concurrently, another subsidiary body of ACC had been seized of the need to sensitize public opinion to the significance and impact of development assistance in general and of the operational activities of the United Nations in particular, against the background of the changing political climate in some donor countries and the consequent decline in the volume of technical co-operation channeled through the United Nations system. He hoped, with the approval of ACC, to commence a concerted effort to correct unbalanced presentations in the mass media of the functioning of the United Nations system.

5. At the same time, since the public image of the Organization, was essentially, a reflection of the Organization's performance constructive criticisms should be welcomed. While the United Nations could not be claimed to be an unqualified success it had not been a complete failure as some were suggesting. Despite its shortcomings, the United Nations system remained the only alternative to international anarchy and global conflagration.

6. The goal of the Department of Public Information was to present a comprehensive and honest picture of the United Nations' successes and failures. It was clear, however, that the Department of Public Information, in conjunction with its counterparts in the specialized agencies, must depend largely upon the co-operation of Governments of Member States, the mass media and non-governmental organizations; he hoped that that co-operation would be forthcoming.

7. Promotion of the establishment of a new world information and communication order was another constant preoccupation of the Department of Public Information. It should be a source of special satisfaction to note that, following a highly charged debate in which diametrically opposing viewpoints had been expressed, a solid consensus seemed to be emerging on that order even though the concept could not yet be defined with precision. Agreement seemed almost unanimous regarding the fundamental elements of that order, namely, the need for free circulation and wider dissemination of information, guaranteeing the diversity of the sources of information and free access to information, on the one hand, and recognition of the need for a better balance in the dissemination of information and for a change in the dependent status of the developing countries in the field of information and communication, on the other.

8. In concrete terms, any improvement in the flow of information was directly linked to the strengthening of the information infrastructure of the developing countries. In that connection, he was pleased at the close and complementary co-operation which had developed between the United Nations and UNESCO. UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication provided assistance to the developing countries in the form of projects and the support that the Programme was receiving from Member States proved that its value was recognized.

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9. For its part, the Department of Public Information continued, to arrange media round tables and journalist encounters to facilitate discussion, understanding and a free exchange of information, as well as to develop the expertise of young journalists and broadcasters through its annual training programme. In addition, the Department had supported the World Newspaper Supplements - a project involving a network of newspapers in all continents interested in promoting the North-South dialogue - as well as the production of a series of films entitled "Agenda for a Small Planet". The Department was also expanding its links with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and other media bodies in the third world.

10. The Department was also focusing on providing services to developing countries as part of its regular programme. If the General Assembly approved the proposal, two new information centres would be opening in Africa in 1983 in response to requests, already endorsed by the Committee on Information, from the Governments of Angola and the Congo. In compliance with the recommendations made by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session and by the Committee on Information during the present year, the Department had also undertaken to review the levels of posts of directors of United Nations Information Centres in order to ensure a better regional balance in the distribution of experienced directors in developing countries.

11. More radio programmes would be produced in the major regional languages of Africa and Asia. Satellite transmission of United Nations television programmes to Africa, Asia and Latin America would be another effective means of disseminating information about the United Nations in those regions. An effort was also being made in the publications programme to produce material in regional languages.

12. The Department would try to achieve as many of those objectives as possible through redeployment of existing resources, although it would not be able to achieve them all in that manner.

13. During its thirty-sixth session, the General Assembly had adopted no less than 39 resolutions which had a bearing on public information programmes. Moreover, at its most recent session, the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had recognized the Department's cardinal responsibility for the formulation and implementation of information tasks. Accordingly, a reasonable balance must be established between the demands made on the Department and the resources made available to it.

14. The Department was endeavouring to make the most effective use of those resources and was providing full support and co-operation to the Office of Financial Services, which was undertaking an in-depth evaluation of its work at the request of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination. The Department, itself, was comprehensively monitoring its activities on a programmatic basis.

15. The three documents before the Committee dealt, each from its own perspective, with the major issues he had touched upon. The report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/37/453) was one of the primary documents regarding a new world information and communication order. The report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21)

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considered the considerable number of reports on specific subjects prepared by the Department of Public Information, and the recommendations made by that Committee would serve as a guide in the Department's future work. The report of the Secretary-General (A/37/446) supplemented the information given in the report of the Committee on Information.

16. The important question of equitable geographical distribution of staff in the Department of Public Information remained one of his highest priorities, and he was considering it in close co-operation with the Office of Personnel Services.

17. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Chairman of the Committee on Information)\*, introducing the report of the Committee on Information, said that the tendency to distort the public image of the United Nations and the silence of the information media regarding the Organization's useful activities had been the subject of extreme concern to the Committee on Information in recent years. In view of the sceptical and even cynical attitudes that had marked the criticism leveled against the United Nations, the Committee on Information had endeavoured to formulate some specific proposals designed to present the Organization in the light of its real functions and importance. The most important such contribution had been the adoption by consensus of 42 recommendations constituting the substance of the report of the Committee on Information.

18. The Committee on Information demonstrated that the United Nations was the forum where understandings between East and West and between North and South could and must be reached, despite ideological discussions and the range of political affiliations fully represented among the 67 members of that Committee.

19. The report recognized the fundamental importance of the information media, whatever their style, their ideological tendency or their official or non-official character.

20. The report had not failed to reaffirm the principle of the free circulation and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information to safeguard the diversity of sources of information, as well as the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At the same time, it had placed emphasis on the crucial relationship between information and development. Peace, disarmament and security were necessary conditions for paving the way for development, for transferring resources to the development process and for making that process an effective stage of international co-operation. If the resources released by disarmament were devoted to development, it would be possible to reduce, if not to eliminate, inequalities and, consequently, the sources of tensions and wars.

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21. Since 80 per cent of the activities of the United Nations system were of an economic, social and cultural nature, the tendency of the world information media to pay insufficient attention to such activities and to pass over the developing countries' efforts to improve their economic, social and cultural situation in silence should be corrected.

22. In the context of the endeavour to enhance the image of the United Nations, attention should be given to the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council, which must once again become the forum for consideration of major issues of the contemporary world and of solutions to the problems in question.

23. For all those reasons, there was a close relationship between the new international economic order and the new world information and communication order. In that connection, the Committee on Information had recommended that the Department of Public Information and the United Nations Development Programme should co-operate more closely, both at Headquarters and in the field offices, in order to pool their resources, avoid duplication and effectively promote the development process. The Committee on Information also addressed an appeal to all members of the United Nations system to co-operate in a concerted manner, through their information services, in promoting United Nations development activities, especially the improvement of the living conditions of the peoples in the developing countries. The Committee on Information placed particular emphasis on the importance of the role played by UNESCO in international co-operation in the sphere of information and requested the Department of Information to step up co-operation with that organization, while avoiding duplication of activities.

24. The United Nations response to the silence, distortions and hostility adversely affecting its image should not be to increase international information bureaucracy. The United Nations system could not set itself up as a self-promotion mechanism. Member countries had entered into a moral obligation to disseminate information on the United Nations through their information media and public or private national or multinational bodies. The role of the United Nations information services was promptly to produce suitable and objective information material that would serve, with rapid and comprehensive distribution, communication media throughout the world.

25. At the same time, it was important to increase the number of correspondents and facilitate access for the editors of the information media of all developing countries to the headquarters of international organizations and to see that a greater number of correspondents from the major Western and Eastern information media were accredited to developing countries. Non-governmental organizations played quite an important role in that field, since they helped to familiarize the public with United Nations activities and to consolidate the Organization's image.

26. The report of the Committee on Information also dealt with the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee and the position of Development Forum. It analysed the question of the equitable geographical distribution of staff, the activities of the United Nations Information Centres, short-wave

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broadcasting and the possibility that the United Nations might acquire its own communications satellite.

27. Undoubtedly, one of the most significant initiatives taken at the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament had been to approve the World Disarmament Campaign aimed at promoting in world public opinion a climate of understanding, confidence and co-operation conducive to peace, the protection of human rights and accelerated development.

28. The Committee on Information had also taken care to draw the attention of the world information media to the priority areas of activity of the United Nations: international peace and security, disarmament, decolonization, the promotion of human rights, the struggle against discrimination and colonialism, the integration of women in the struggle for peace and development and the struggle against apartheid. It had also highlighted the need to pay particular attention to the preparation of information material and radio broadcasts in the Asian and Central European languages and to the opening of information centres in Angola and the Congo. Furthermore, it had recommended that the training of journalists in the developing countries should be supported and that the news agencies of the non-aligned countries should be used.

29. The report he was introducing hinged on the three aspects of the mandate of the Committee on Information, namely, promotion of the new world information and communication order, the evaluation of progress made by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications and the review of United Nations public information policies and activities. He hoped that, once the Committee had considered that report, it would be able to submit to the General Assembly a draft resolution aimed at integrating information into the development process.

30. Mr. BOLLA (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)\*, introducing document A/37/453 on behalf of the Director-General of UNESCO, said that the document contained a summary of UNESCO's activities since the previous session of the General Assembly in connection, firstly, with the implementation of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) and, secondly, with the facilitation of the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

31. One of the most recent salient events in UNESCO is work in the field of communication had been the establishment of IPDC, which should help to reduce and progressively to eliminate the imbalances and inequities from which many countries suffered in the area of communication. That mechanism had begun operating in a satisfactory way, in spite of the insufficiency of the funds made available by the international community and, in particular by some of the industrialized countries. None the less, major regional projects had been initiated in such areas as press agencies, where glaring imbalances existed. Regional co-operation for the

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improvement of the gathering, distribution and exchange of news had been established in Asia, and similar development was anticipated in Africa and the Caribbean.

32. UNESCO, in co-operation with ITU, would shortly be finalizing its plans for the creation and strengthening of African press agencies and PANA. Funds made available for those projects by UNDP, IPDC, the Fund-in-trust of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations amounted to almost \$5 million and, together with funds pledged by African agencies and Governments, should make it possible to provide the continent of Africa with the infrastructures which it needed.

33. Other projects currently underway sought to develop the capacity for the production and exchange of news and radio programmes in certain regions of the world, such as Latin America and the Arab States; one example was the project to create the reporting agency ALASEI, with headquarters in Panama, and the broadcasting training centre in Damascus. In the vast enterprise of communication development, UNESCO was working in close co-operation with ITU, the United Nations, UNDP, UNIDO, UPU, FAO and WHO.

34. Another event landmark in UNESCO's work in the field of communication had been the World Conference on Cultural Policies, which had highlighted the close relationship between communication, education and culture. Communication had today become an essential factor in education, both inside and outside the school, and in cultural production and dissemination. The many recommendations adopted by the Conference related to various fields in which culture, education and communication were closely linked, such as the endogenous production of audio-visual programmes for television or the cinema and the establishment and development of public or private national cultural industries. The training of producers in the audio-visual field was one of the major concerns of many developing countries, which feared that massive imports of foreign cultural products might impair their cultural identity, which would then be difficult to reaffirm.

35. The Conference held in Mexico City, had also adopted by consensus a declaration which, in paragraph 36, stated one of the principles of the new world information and communication order: "The free flow and widest and most balanced dissemination of information, ideas and knowledge ... imply for all nations the right not only to receive but also to transmit cultural, educational, scientific and technical information".

36. The third important event for UNESCO during the previous year had been the drawing up of the medium-term Plan for 1984-1989, in which the Director-General, after analysing world problems and stressing the significance of communication problems between people and between cultures, was proposing a major programme entitled "Communication at the service of man". The problems addressed by that programme concerned the relationship that communication had with power, development, mutual understanding and the maintenance of peace. It provided statistics which pointed up the imbalances between the developing countries and the industrialized



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countries in the field of communication. The central thrust of the programme was to help to establish a more equitable situation in the field of communication and the media, whether the press, books, radio or television, through the development of infrastructures and the training staff.

37. The Director-General had told the Executive Council of UNESCO that UNESCO's task was to promote knowledge and mutual understanding among nations and, to that end, to facilitate the free circulation of ideas through words and through pictures. He had stressed that that principle was the corner-stone of the programmes proposed in the medium-term Plan, which stated also that freedom of information comprised the freedom of peoples and groups to organize the gathering, dissemination and circulation of news. At the end of the debate, the Executive Council had decided to express its full agreement with the main thrust of the Director-General's proposals relating to communication.

38. The Executive Council had noted that the proposed programme provided a framework for broadening the bases for the establishment of the new information and communication order.

39. The World Congress on Books organized by UNESCO in London in June 1982 had met with great success; books were still a primary means of communication for the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge and should therefore be developed in all languages and in all regions of the world. He stressed the importance in the field of communication of joint action by the United Nations and UNESCO and welcomed the existing co-operation with the Department of Public Information.

40. Mr. RODRIGUEZ-MEDINA (Colombia) requested that the statement made by the Chairman of the Committee on Information should be reproduced in extenso as an annex to the Committee's report.

41. Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile), referring to the statement made by the representative of UNESCO, said that Chile recognized the importance of the right to the free circulation of information but believed that that right must be subject to appropriate regulation if it was to be applied in all countries. His delegation also believed that the right to satellite broadcasting should be balanced, in order to avoid any distortions.

42. Mr. SHERIFIS (Cyprus) supported the proposal of the representative of Colombia and further proposed that the three statements which had just been made should be published in extenso.

43. Mr. GONZALEZ-MANET (Cuba) supported the proposal made by the representative of Colombia.

44. Mr. CORTI (Argentina) supported the proposal made by the representative of Cyprus.

45. The CHAIRMAN said that, if there were no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished the texts of the three statements to be published in extenso.

46. It was so decided.

47. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) pointed out that a typographical error had slipped into the last paragraph of the Spanish text of annex II to the report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21). The date indicated should be 1792 and not 1972.

48. Mr. HANSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the 10 States members of the European Community, said that freedom of thought, opinion and expression, as well as the free circulation of information and ideas, were essential human rights and important elements of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

49. The best way to defend those rights was through well-informed and critical public opinion throughout the world, which presupposed a diversity of sources of information and the possibility of choosing among them. Mutual understanding among peoples was advanced by fuller communication and by improved access to information, which should not be subservient to the policies of Governments. A free press was necessary to keep citizens fully informed, to monitor government activities, reflect public opinion and formulate criticisms. Moreover, freedom of communication and the free flow of information were indispensable for economic and social progress.

50. At the same time, the right of every community to express and preserve its own personality should not be ignored. Culture, language, and ways of thinking were a gauge of the diversification of means of information as well as an element of enrichment of the universal heritage.

51. With regard to the dissemination of information about the United Nations itself and the way in which the United Nations was perceived by public opinion, it was essential, in order to attain or even approach the ultimate objectives of the Organization, that the work of the United Nations system should be understood and supported by the peoples of the entire world. The activities of the Department of Public Information were, of course crucial in that field. The 10 particularly valued the Department's efforts to promote economic, social and cultural development, especially of the developing countries. They supported the endeavours of the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department carried out its work in the most efficient possible manner, particularly through increased use of journalistic techniques in order to promote the still too limited dialogue between developing and developed countries and among developing countries themselves.

52. The 10 had studied with great interest the report of the Committee on Information and its recommendations to the General Assembly. They were aware that the consensus reached on the recommendations was the result of hard work and willingness to overcome numerous difficulties. Without wishing to reopen the debate on those questions, they felt it useful to emphasize some specific points in the recommendations which were of the utmost importance for future work. In particular, it was necessary to improve and facilitate the international flow of

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information so as to redress the existing imbalance in international communications resources which worked mainly against the developing countries while maintaining basic freedoms the diminution of which could only run counter to the end result sought.

53. In the search for a new world information and communication order, full account must be taken of the realities of a changing world and it should be ensured that facts, ideas and opinions were considered and reflected by the media in a balanced manner through the establishment of regular flows of information between developing and developed countries. In that respect it must be borne in mind that economic development was connected with access to sources of information, including those of a technical character.

54. With the establishment under the auspices of UNESCO of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), the United Nations had launched an important project which aimed to redress existing imbalances and improve communication capabilities. At the second session of the Intergovernmental Council of IPDC a number of countries had announced their contributions to the Special Account of IPDC, while other countries had indicated that they were willing to support specific projects recommended by IPDC. In the view of the 10, the essential task of IPDC was to set in motion practical technical co-operation that would develop training and establish the necessary structures for communication.

55. Among the activities of the Department of Public Information, high priority should be given to expanding the understanding and implementation of human rights. The flagrant violations of those rights in various parts of the world showed the need to make common efforts in that field. Another major priority was to help the public understand that the United Nations was the primary instrument for seeking solutions to the disputes which arose in the world and for encouraging development. About 80 per cent of the activities of the United Nations system were concerned with social and economic development and it was in that field that the United Nations was making a decisive contribution to nations struggling for development. If that dimension were better known, the public image of the United Nations system would no doubt be better.

56. The 10 strongly recommended the continued publication of Development Forum, the only system-wide publication of the United Nations system, and believed that all specialized agencies should contribute to its financing. Development Forum provided issue-oriented information on the actions and achievements of the United Nations bodies and their partners in the developing countries. The publication was widely appreciated for its coverage of social and economic affairs and related issues.

57. Many of the recommendations before the Committee had financial and organizational implications. The 10 expressed concern that once again the Committee on Information had been unable to indicate the relative priorities of the recommendations, in view of the need for economy and sound management which should

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guide the work of the Department of Public Information. In that respect, the Committee on Information should not be asked to implement new programmes without a concerted effort to identify low-priority programmes and potential savings. In order to avoid duplication the Committee on Information should not undertake tasks or initiate debates which were already being carried out by other United Nations bodies such as UNESCO or the ITU. It would also be helpful if, while respecting the competence of the various bodies of the United Nations, the Committee on Information undertook a qualitative, end-user-oriented evaluation of United Nations activities in the fields of information and communication.

58. Mr. ZAREMBOVSKI (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the General Assembly, at its thirty-seventh session, was taking up its discussion of questions relating to information in a situation in which there was no place for any further advocacy of the "free flow of information". His delegation was concerned to note that certain Western reactionary circles were using the pretext of the "free flow of information" to attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of States and infringe upon their national sovereignty in violation of the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-sixth session.

59. The meeting held recently under the official auspices of the United States Department of State at which, as The New York Times had reported, ways of modifying the social structures of the socialist countries, in particular through the information media, had been discussed, could only be termed interference in internal affairs.

60. It could not be denied that at the current time, and in particular in international relations, two world views were in sharp confrontation in a class struggle between the world of socialism and the world of capitalism. In that struggle, however, it was not the side that succeeded in slandering the adversary or distorting its views that won victory. The controversy must be an exchange of arguments, not of insinuations, belligerent rhetoric and falsifications.

61. In the early 1970s, Senator Fulbright, like other sensible Western politicians, had called for the abolition of the instruments of psychological warfare "Radio Liberty" and "Radio Free Europe" and the new radio station directed against Cuba which would no doubt serve the same purpose.

62. He recalled that Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe prohibited ideological aggression. None the less, seven years after the signing of the Helsinki Final Act and four years after the adoption by UNESCO of the Declaration concerning the mass media, the United States was preparing to rekindle its anti-communist crusade against a number of newly-independent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America and was seeking, once more, to use broadcasting as a foreign policy instrument. At the aforementioned meeting in Washington, Secretary of State Schultz had indicated that an amount of \$44 million would be devoted to intensifying broadcasts beamed to the socialist countries.

(Mr. Zarembovski, Byelorussian SSR)

63. The situation was such that an American radio station located in the Federal Republic of Germany was broadcasting instructions to subversive elements in the Polish People's Republic, telling them where, when and how to commit acts of sabotage, diversion and provocation against the legitimate Government of a sovereign socialist State. According to certain people in the United Nations, no one could even protest because of what was termed the freedom of information. He could see no such freedom or right under international law permitting the challenging of the principle of national sovereignty and that of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, both of which were enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

64. The irresponsible use of the mass media should be resolutely condemned; to that end it would seem essential to draft fundamental principles regulating the international activities of the mass media; those principles should be in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations and with the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and should further develop the provisions of the UNESCO Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and the Incitement to War. His delegation trusted that the Committee on Information would devote the necessary attention to that issue.

65. Another aspect of international information activities which had been considered in recent years by the United Nations and other international organs was what had been called information imperialism. A number of developing countries, lacked the technical means and were therefore dependent on the telegraph agencies and television and radio broadcasting companies of the major Western Powers. Accordingly, they received distorted news concerning socio-economic developments in the world and thus became targets to the ideological expansion of imperialism. Accordingly, the developing countries were rightly raising the issue of the establishment of a new world information order and speaking of national sovereignty in the field of information and culture and the elimination of news and propaganda monopolies.

66. The Byelorussian SSR would continue to support actively, as it had always supported, the struggle of the developing countries to restructure international relations in the field of information on a democratic basis which took account of their legitimate interests. It therefore endorsed the major principles of the new world information order which were set forth in the documents of the conferences and meetings of the non-aligned countries and in the decisions of the United Nations and of UNESCO.

67. In fulfilling the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly, the Committee on Information must focus on how to ensure that the mass media served the interests of peace, the elimination of the threat of nuclear war, disarmament, security and international co-operation, and on how to prevent the media from being used for slander, provocation and war propaganda. A first step might be to launch an appeal to that effect to the mass media.

(Mr. Zarembovski, Byelorussian SSR)

68. Having studied the reports before the Committee in connection with the item under consideration his delegation believed that the recommendations submitted by the Committee on Information in paragraph 91 of its report were, on the whole, constructive. He drew particular attention to recommendation 8 in which the priority tasks of the Department of Public Information were reaffirmed. He expressed the hope that the Department of Public Information would spare no effort to settle such problems as the underrepresentation of the developing countries and the imbalance in the writers chosen to draft the Department's publications. It was clear from reading Development Forum that the approach was often one-sided and the positive results of the social and economic development of the socialist countries and of newly-independent countries which had chosen to pursue a non-capitalist path towards development were not taken into account.

69. Finally, he recalled the positive role played by UNESCO in the restructuring of international relations in the field of information. Clearly the United Nations and UNESCO must work in close co-operation. His delegation considered, inter alia, that the United Nations and, in particular the Committee on Information, should make a positive contribution to the preparations for and the work of the international conference planned by UNESCO to mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the UNESCO Declaration concerning the mass media.

70. Mr. PALAZZO (Brazil) said that in order to promote the establishment of a new information and communication order, it was necessary to ensure a free flow of information, to eliminate the state of dependency in which certain countries were in the area of information, to provide for wide dissemination of information and to strengthen the developing countries' infrastructure in that area. To that end co-operation and co-ordination between the Committee on Information and UNESCO must be maintained and increased so as to prevent any overlapping of activities.

71. The question of the public image of the United Nations involved the full range of information policies and activities of the Organization. To that end it was necessary to disseminate well-balanced information to the general public and to ensure that all the material issued by the Department of Public Information and the competent press sections of all the organs of the United Nations was of a high quality.

72. In that connection, his delegation endorsed recommendation 23 contained in the report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21) because the effectiveness and cost-benefit ratio of the Department's activities could only be ascertained if there was well-prepared information on those activities and on its present and future work programme.

73. Referring to the geographical composition of the staff of the Department, his delegation was in favour of reshuffling the personnel in order to rectify the geographical imbalance and to achieve an equitable distribution of posts. His delegation also favoured recommendations 22 (d) and (e) concerning the upgrading of the posts of information centre directors and the establishment of a category of national information officers provided that the ensuing expenditure was not detrimental to other priorities and did not create new financial burdens.

(Mr. Palazzo, Brazil)

74. His delegation was pleased to note, from the report of the Secretary-General (A/37/446), that the Secretary-General had taken immediate action in compliance with the requests made by the General Assembly in resolution 36/49 and by the Committee on Information at its substantive session of 1982.
75. He stressed the need to strengthen support and assistance to developing countries in the areas of personnel training, transfer of technology and development of a steady two-way flow of information between developed and developing countries. As a developing country Brazil was very interested in the World Newspaper Supplements project and hoped that some way would be found to keep the project alive. Finally, he paid tribute to the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and to his colleagues for the manner in which they performed their tasks.
76. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt) noted with satisfaction that the Bureau included two representatives of Arab countries and that the Committee was presided over by a personality from the Yemen Arab Republic, a country with which Egypt had had relations since the earliest times and which had, side by side with it, distinguished itself in the struggle for the liberation of the Arab world.
77. His delegation had carefully studied the reports before the Committee but wished, before commenting on them in detail, to make a number of specific observations concerning problems which existed in the field of communications and the obstacles that stood in the way of the establishment of a new world information and communication order.
78. The non-aligned countries had been the first to draw attention, at Algiers in 1973, to the necessity of rectifying the inequality which had existed at that time and which continued to prevail in the field of information. UNESCO had confirmed that necessity by adopting the Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War in Paris in 1978, and the twenty-first session of the General Conference, held at Belgrade in 1980, had marked a historic turning point in that area, by adopting the International Programme for the Development of Communication. In addition, the importance of the efforts of the United Nations Committee on Information since the thirty-fourth session of the General Assembly aimed at reducing the inequalities between the developed and the developing world with respect to information should not be underestimated.
79. Nevertheless, despite the efforts that had been made, obstacles remained both political and economic. At the political level, it was well known that the mass media in the Western countries exercised a de facto monopoly in the field of information and they provided only very incomplete and often negative coverage of social and economic events in third world countries. Unfortunately, they were not alone in that respect. In many countries, hegemonistic control was exercised over the free flow of information by those who held political, financial or scientific power.

(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

80. Information was but the most basic element of communication, which encompassed every aspect of social and cultural life and constituted a bilateral process in which a balance must be struck between the freedom of individuals and the power of the State. The free flow of information presupposed the existence of the multitude of individual and collective rights laid down in the many international instruments adopted in the post-war period. That was why communication was an issue in all repressive societies.

81. Numerous conditions had to be fulfilled before a new world information and communication order could be established. The developed countries had to exercise greater control over the transnational corporations (the communication giants) engaged in the dissemination of information, the socialist countries had to reform their economic and social policies, while the third world countries, which were not exempt from such problems, had to introduce radical changes in their economic and technological infrastructure and in their economic and social life in order to be able to meet their information and education needs.

82. At the economic level, the establishment of a new world information and communication order was inseparable from the establishment of a new international economic order. All countries must act immediately to strengthen their bonds of co-operation with others with a view to reducing the high cost of transmitting information and tackling the problem of inadequate infrastructure and the shortage of trained personnel in the developing countries. A programme or plan of action along the lines of the Vienna Programme which had been adopted by the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development in 1979 should be implemented. The Vienna Programme, in particular paragraphs 69 to 75 concerning the establishment of an international system of scientific and technological information, had a direct bearing on the establishment of a new world information and communication order, since the latter presupposed the existence of such a scientific and technological infrastructure. In addition, UNESCO should co-ordinate its efforts under the International Programme for the Development of Communication with the activities envisaged in the Vienna Programme.

83. In the meantime, in order to ensure the dissemination of news concerning the third world, the developing countries should set up their own communications networks, taking inspiration from the success of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies. Co-operation should also be developed between the Department of Public Information and United Nations information centres on the one hand, and national information organs in developing countries on the other. The Department of Public Information had a very important role to play as a clearing-house for retransmitting information on the developing countries to major information organizations and serving as a link between national information agencies and large transnational corporations. Such co-operation must not be a one-way street. If DPI wanted developing countries to report on events involving the United Nations, it should reciprocate where events relating to the developing world were concerned.

84. In that connection, his delegation regretted that DPI had mentioned only in passing the one-week symposium on Palestinian rights that had been held in New York



(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

and that it had not taken account of United Nations seminars on the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people held in Dakar and Malta, even though they had been sponsored by the Organization.

85. His delegation had already emphasized in the Committee on Information the close link which existed between information and international peace and security. There was also a link between international information and the question of the liberation of peoples struggling against colonialism or foreign occupation. The Department of Public Information must redefine its priorities in that regard in keeping with the UNESCO Declaration, which, in article 2, paragraph 3, defined the role of the mass media in strengthening peace and international understanding, countering wars of aggression, racialism and apartheid and other violations of human rights. DPI should also regulate its activities in accordance with General Assembly resolutions and recommendations of the Committee on Information.

86. Before making any specific comments on the reports under consideration, he wished to pay a tribute to the journalists from the United States and the free world who, during the recent events in Lebanon, had not hesitated to risk their lives in order to provide world public opinion with a reliable and indisputable description of the terrible suffering inflicted on the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples. The conduct of those heroes of free information was a perfect illustration of the spirit of the Paris Declaration, and Egypt could only urge the Department of Public Information to be guided by their example.

87. Egypt wished to make a recommendation, in connection with those events, and to suggest that it should be added to the recommendations to be submitted to the General Assembly on questions relating to information. The recommendation would read:

"In conformity with the priorities defined by the Assembly in its successive resolutions relating to the mandate of the Department of Public Information,

"Being aware that the mass media should contribute to the strengthening of peace and international understanding and in countering racialism, apartheid, incitement to war, aggressive war and other violations of human rights (article 3, paras. 1 and 2, of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles),

"Recognizing that the events of which the Lebanese and Palestinians have recently been the victims in Lebanon relate to the question of international peace and security as well as to the violation of human rights,

"Asserting that it is the role of the Department of Public Information to ensure that questions relating to the priorities assigned to it are reported more fully and more faithfully,

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"Paying a tribute to the important and constructive contribution which the world mass media have made to ensuring that the voice of the Palestinian people is heard in their struggle against foreign occupation,

"The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General undertake a factual and well-documented study of the reaction of the world mass media to the tragic events of which the Palestinians and Lebanese were recently the victims and that, in that study, he evaluate the way in which the mass media reported all the aspects of the recent events."

88. Egypt was convinced that such a study would be of considerable importance, because it would help to evaluate objectively the contribution made by the mass media of the free world, and it would show the world that the United Nations was following events closely and not merely harping on the same subjects year after year. The study would also help the Department of Public Information to redefine its priorities.

89. Referring to the report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21), he fully endorsed paragraphs 18, 21 and 22, which reflected the positive role which the Department of Public Information had played in the context of the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. However, the Department must strike a balance between such important questions as disarmament and other, no less important questions, such as the seventh emergency special session on the question of Palestine, which it had hardly mentioned at all.

90. He also welcomed the fact that co-operation had been established between the Department and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies (para. 25); the Department must not relegate to the background events involving the non-aligned countries - for example, the meetings in Kuwait, Cyprus and Havana - especially since those countries represented two thirds of mankind. By the same token, co-operation between the United Nations information centres and national and regional information media must be a two-way street, and the activities of the information centres must be consistent with the priorities defined by the United Nations.

91. With regard to the Arabic Radio Unit, mentioned in paragraph 45, his delegation felt that it should be strengthened by providing it with new competent elements and by ensuring that its production was increased, within the limits of available means.

92. He also welcomed the existing co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the United Nations specialized agencies, together with the contribution which UNESCO had made to the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

93. As to the recommendations submitted by the Committee, Egypt particularly agreed with recommendation 18, to the effect that the Department of Public Information should organize, in close co-operation with UNESCO, a round table on a new world information and communication order. It also supported recommendation 25 concerning co-operation between the Department of Public Information and regional

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news agencies and recommendation 40 on the support to be provided to the developing countries in conjunction with the Vienna Programme of Action.

94. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information (A/37/446), his delegation fully supported the training programme for journalists and broadcasters from developing countries, discussed in section VII, and he expressed the hope that the specialized agencies would lend their support to that ambitious programme, undertaken by the Department of Public Information.

95. Egypt had read with considerable interest the report of UNESCO (A/37/453), in particular, paragraphs 2 to 14 concerning the selection criteria governing the choice of projects for the development of communication. Those criteria were consistent with his Government's plans and programmes, particularly since the Government had embarked on economic integration with the Sudan. Egypt and the Sudan, which represented more than half of the Arab world, hoped that fruitful co-operation would be established with the International Programme for the Development of Communication.

96. In Egypt's opinion, the UNESCO programme in the field of information and communication, referred to in paragraphs 15 to 29, offered a very good basis for the elaboration of the new world order. The UNESCO draft medium-term plan (paras. 30-33) dealt with the question of communication in the fields of education, industry and agriculture and thus reflected the intrinsic connection between communication and development.

97. The World Conference on Cultural Policies, held recently at Mexico City, also represented important progress towards the establishment of a more equitable world communication order.

98. In conclusion, he stressed the need to become aware of change and to accept it. In that connection, he quoted the words of Nehru to the effect that one could not change the course of history by turning pictures to the wall; contemporary history was characterized by the impressive rate at which change intervened in the lives of men.

99. The CHAIRMAN said that the list of speakers on agenda item 67 would be closed at the end of the Committee's meeting on Tuesday, 26 October, and he urged delegations wishing to speak on that item to submit their names without delay.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.