



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 12th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RODRIGUEZ-MEDINA (Colombia)

later: Mr. MUBAREZ (Yemen)

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SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.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. ZDRQJOWY (Poland) said that for many years the concept of freedom of information and its balanced flow had been the focal point of the debate on the item, and a source of controversy and different approaches by various delegations. All delegations had declared themselves in favour of freedom of information. Yet the problem arose of what was meant by freedom of information. It was not an idealistic, self-sustained concept, nor was it anarchy. His delegation considered that freedom of information was interrelated with prevailing realities and that it should be exercised in accordance with the generally accepted norms of civilized societies. That was why it was inseparable from responsibility, as stated at the General Conference of UNESCO, held at Belgrade in 1980. Interpreted thus, freedom of information formed the basis of the proposed new world information and communication order.

2. His delegation had more than once referred to the activities of certain broadcasting stations, and especially to their programmes in the Polish language, which claimed to undertake the role of an opposition force, but were directed from abroad. He reiterated his delegation's position on the matter, namely, that such measures: (1) constituted clear propaganda aggression against Poland and interference in the country's internal affairs; (2) were a clear example of the misuse of freedom of information, which was transformed into disinformation, to the detriment of the political and cultural identity of Poland; and (3) had a larger dimension in the life of the international community, since they aggravated the climate of relations among States and hindered efforts to establish a new world information and communication order. His delegation was of the opinion that the principles of international law and the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter should govern international relations in the field of public information.

3. Referring to the content of the information flow in international relations, he said that exchanges of information could form an extremely important confidence-building measure between States, and thus influence the world political situation. Adequate and reliable information was not only essential for promoting goodwill between Governments and peoples and for breaking down artificial barriers created by prejudice and discrimination, but also constituted the very essence of communication. It was therefore essential for the world's news media to place the highest priority on international peace and security, disarmament, international

(Mr. Zdrojowy, Poland)

understanding and economic co-operation, respect for human rights and the struggle against racism, apartheid and other negative phenomena in international life.

4. United Nations information services should reflect the main concerns of the Organization in order to generate media interest and support in the fields of disarmament and world peace. He welcomed the statement by Mr. Akashi, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, regarding his determination to instil greater efficiency in the work of the Department of Public Information. His delegation supported the priorities and programmes adopted in the Department's public information policies and activities. It also noted with appreciation the efforts of the Department to publicize the issue of disarmament on the eve of the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. With regard to the forthcoming world disarmament campaign, he hoped that the Department's resources, together with the experience of the Centre for Disarmament, would contribute to making the public more aware of the dangers of the arms race.

5. In paragraph 13 of his report on questions relating to information (A/37/446), the Secretary-General had placed special emphasis on the Department's co-operation with regional news agencies, a development which indicated the resilience acquired by the Department and which suggested the potential for adaptation to the changing needs of the international community. His delegation supported the efforts undertaken by UNESCO, including the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communication which, it was to be hoped, would assist the developing countries in liberating themselves from the domination of the Western information media.

6. Despite its many achievements, the Department still suffered from conceptual and methodological shortcomings. The process of reorientation had been too slow, and there was a continued need for more comprehensive and responsible information programming. Moreover, the principle of equitable geographical representation should be applied to the staff of the Department.

7. Mr. CHAN (Singapore) said that advances in communications and the marvels of modern electronics, with their information potential, had generated as much suspicion as enthusiasm. After all, technology could not resolve the question of the quality of the information transmitted, nor determine how news would be perceived by various peoples. It had fallen to the Special Political Committee to consider the qualitative aspects of information, which were perhaps the most difficult to resolve.

8. With regard to the new world information and communication order, he referred to the four points of agreement indicated by Mr. Akashi, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information: the need for free circulation and broader dissemination of information; a guaranteed diversity of sources of information and free access to information; recognition of the need for greater balance in the dissemination of information; and recognition of the need to change the developing countries' state of dependence in the field of information. Yet, despite the importance of those four points, each time that the question of the new order was considered, ideological elements were introduced.

(Mr. Chan, Singapore)

9. Just as the developing countries should recognize the interests of the majority of the developed countries with regard to information media and the link between such media and Governments, the developed countries should understand the genuine frustration felt by developing countries in matters of information. Such frustration arose for three main reasons: (1) information on developing countries in the international press was deficient, since it presented disjointed and pessimistic views; (2) their dependence on the main news agencies gave developing countries a restricted and frequently erroneous view of other developing countries; and (c) it was almost impossible to succeed in having articles or films produced in developing countries published or disseminated by the media in developed countries. The best way of resolving some of those problems would be to improve the public information channels in developing countries. That would provide the journalists of the international news organizations with well-informed counterparts with whom to exchange information, and it would improve the accuracy of the news disseminated. To that end, Singapore supported comprehensive journalist training programmes organized on the basis of multilateral co-operation. It also supported the continued development of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, and was gratified at the various programmes organized by the Department of Public Information.

10. His delegation wished to reiterate its concern over the public image of the United Nations. It felt that that situation was due to the failure by the United Nations to discharge its primary task, namely, the maintenance of international peace and security; to the irrelevance of decisions adopted by the Organization in relation to world realities; and to inadequate dissemination of information on the work of United Nations, particularly its non-political activities, by the communication media. In that regard, as the Chairman of the Committee on Information had stated, the information media had neglected to point out that 80 per cent of the activities of the United Nations system were economic, social or cultural in nature. Some of the main news agencies had referred to the ineffectiveness of the United Nations. While such an assertion was unjust, it was important not to charge the information media blindly with calumny. The United Nations system should be capable of accepting objective criticism of its work.

11. Turning to the Department of Public Information, he referred to the question of equitable geographical distribution. The Asia and Pacific group was the most under-represented in the Department; it still had only 12.9 per cent of the posts and had yet to achieve its regional midpoint of 18.1 per cent. In document A/37/21, paragraph 30, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had explained that the geographical composition of staff in the Department had been inherited from the past, and since many staff members had permanent contracts, improvements in the geographical composition would take time, depending on the rate of attrition. While his delegation recognized that point, it urged that the geographical imbalance should be redressed.

12. Referring to the Department's training programme for journalists and broadcasters from developing countries (A/37/446, sect. VII), he said that those training activities were providing opportunities for editors and broadcasters to

(Mr. Chan, Singapore)

share experiences and obtain a better understanding of the role of the United Nations. He expressed his delegation's continued support for the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and his staff. He congratulated the Chairman and officers of the Committee on Information on the work they had done and on the consensus that had been reached on the 42 recommendations submitted to the General Assembly.

13. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that communications and information were an undeniable fact in contemporary society and introduced a new dimension into it. The distribution of communication and information media and the possibilities represented by those media continued to conform to the current international distribution of economic power. The imbalances to which that unequal distribution of information media gave rise also created obstacles to certain development efforts or systematically rendered them ineffective. Technical progress had increased the inequalities and disparities between States and cultures to such a point that only those possessing the most advanced means controlled not only the flow of information on a world scale but also the system of international relations. In the light of that situation, his delegation hoped for the establishment of a new world information and communication order that would serve to decrease and gradually eliminate the imbalances and inequalities in that sector which were affecting many countries.

14. Relations in the information sector were included in the framework of international relations in general. If international relations were not based on mutual respect among peoples and jointly shared progress among nations, it would unfortunately be impossible to avoid the disintegration of society and the permanent destabilization of the international situation, phenomena which, while arousing concern, were common in the contemporary world. In earlier resolutions of the non-aligned countries, of the States members of OAU and of the United Nations, the third world had already unequivocally emphasized that co-operation in the information and communication sector was an integral part of the struggle to establish new and more democratic relations.

15. Turning to UNESCO, he noted that the International Programme for the Development of Communication had begun to function normally. However, in view of the vast needs of most of the developing countries in the communications sector, Member States, the non-governmental organizations and the professional media should give evidence of greater solidarity in order to put the objectives of that Programme into practice. In that context, the efforts of UNESCO to bring about an effective change in the situation in sectors such as that of news agencies, where the imbalances were particularly glaring and inadmissible, should be encouraged. His delegation accordingly welcomed the co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, as well as the co-operation between UNESCO and the International Telecommunication Union, with a view to strengthening the means at the disposal of news agencies, especially those in Africa, and the Pan-African News Agency in particular which represented an important contribution by Africa to the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

(Mr. Ka, Senegal)

16. With reference to the activities of the Department of Public Information, his delegation supported the various recommendations on information submitted to the General Assembly, for example, the renewal of the mandate of the Committee on Information; the urgent need to change the situation of the developing countries in the information and communication sectors; the strengthening of the activities of the Department of Public Information in order to ensure better knowledge of the United Nations and its work; the organization, by the Department and UNESCO, of a round-table conference on the new world information and communication order; the adoption of urgent measures in order to achieve an equitable geographical distribution and thus increase the representation of the group of developing countries, especially at the higher and decision-making levels, in accordance with Article 101 (3) of the Charter; the strengthening of the capacity and role of the United Nations Information Centres; and the training of journalists and broadcasters from the developing countries.

17. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the changes being made and the proposals being put forward, and also the limitations that were being placed on the adoption of particular measures. The Secretary-General should in that connection give priority to the implementation of the relevant recommendations and ensure that the Department of Public Information was provided with adequate resources despite current budgetary difficulties. If the recommendations of the Committee on Information were properly applied, the international community would be able to make gradual progress towards defining the principles of the new world information and communication order.

18. Mrs. OULDDADDAH (Mauritania) said that her delegation endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on Information and associated itself with the delegations which attached great importance to the establishment of a new world information order. Its decision was based on three considerations, namely, that freedom of expression was a fundamental right; that there was no democracy without freedom of expression and information; and that there was an urgent need to put an end to the monopoly of the information media of the industrialized countries in order to achieve a more just and balanced dissemination of information that would free the developing countries from the tragic state of complete dependence which was their present lot. In his statement to the Committee on Information, the Secretary-General, speaking about the appearance of new countries, said that "the realization of their political independence, the revolution of their rising hopes and expectations and their attempts to set right past imbalances were forces reshaping modern history" (A/37/21). In supporting the promotion of a new world information and communication order, it was necessary to denounce the current neo-colonial type situation.

19. There was no doubt that the Department of Public Information should continue to do its utmost to ensure a more equitable geographical distribution of staff, particularly in relation to the third-world countries. It was essential in that context for the Department to keep always in mind its obligation to encourage not only North-South but also South-South co-operation. Similarly, the systematic assessment action announced by the Department was arousing interest, since it

(Mrs. Oulddaddah, Mauritania)

should be interpreted as a means of achieving greater efficiency at less cost; the Department must be given adequate resources to carry out its activities, particularly with regard to training. It was also essential for publication of the Development Forum to be continued and for other United Nations publications to be more widely disseminated so that the Organization could make itself better known. That implied improved co-ordination between the bodies responsible for information and communication and those of an economic and even political nature, on the one hand, and between the bodies responsible for the different aspects of information and communication, on the other.

20. She noted that UNESCO had carried out important activities in a relatively short period, dividing them between research and action, two complementary fields. In that text, support should be given to the objectives of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, the priorities of which included not only creation of the necessary structural framework but also training of the relevant staff. In that connection, it was extremely important for the recently independent countries to realize that they had not only the right but also the duty to inform and educate their people in order to protect their cultural identity, promote their own social and cultural values and counteract, where necessary, the cultural aggression of the industrialized countries. It was only by acting thus that those countries could really exist and develop. Only through the preservation of cultural identity was it possible for development to acquire its full meaning and for it to become a civilization project based on a people's own values and open to dialogue with other cultures. In any case, social change did not imply the dissolution of a people's heritage or the formation of a uniform culture; moreover, desired change was not fully realized unless the symbols and the wisdom of tradition were brought into play. Such an attitude did not impugn either the universal principles of civilization or the scientific and technical progress achieved in the industrialized countries. It implied a more dynamic approach to research and technology. It was essential therefore for the developing countries, by their own efforts and with the help of the international community, to foster and stimulate studies and research in what they considered to be priority sectors, including information. That was especially important in view of the fact that research in the third-world countries was carried out by researcher staff who placed themselves at the disposal of the developed countries, where priority was given to the problems of the industrialized world. It therefore appeared unlikely that technical innovations directed to the problems of the third world would emerge until the developing countries could conduct the research themselves.

21. Mr. Mubarez (Yemen) took the Chair.

22. Mrs. AMAILUK (Uganda) said that information played an important role in international relations because it was able to promote international peace and understanding and contribute to the solution of conflicts. For the developing countries, the dissemination of information was very necessary in the development process as it made it possible to impart new skills and carry out national mobilization.

(Mrs. Amailuk, Uganda)

23. Unfortunately, the present information order was weighted against the developing countries because the dissemination of news to and from those countries was monopolized by the Western news media. Five large news agencies in the industrialized countries disseminated over 80 per cent of world news. Since those agencies were commercial in nature, they were interested in disseminating news which would sell, which meant that there was a manipulation and distortion of facts.

24. Events concerning developing countries which were considered newsworthy were often conditioned by prejudices, which had their roots in the pre-colonial era, and by the ideological views of those news agencies. Consequently, achievements were not mentioned and, on the contrary, prominence was given to news concerning real or imagined conflicts. The struggle of liberation movements was given unfavourable coverage or erroneously placed in the context of the ideological conflict between East and West. The majority of the public of the developed countries, which accounted for more than half of the membership of the United Nations, therefore had scarce and inaccurate information about developing countries. Because of the monopoly of those news agencies, readers in the third world knew little about what occurred in their own country and in other developing countries. They learned only what the agencies wanted them to learn and, as a result, the third world countries misunderstood the events taking place in other developing countries.

25. There was clearly a need to rectify the present one-way flow of information. At the plenary meeting on 25 September 1981, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Uganda had said that the quest for a new international information order formed part of the overall framework of the new international economic order. The development of communities in the third world was hampered by a lack of participation in the dissemination of information, and the almost total monopoly of the news media by the industrialized countries denied the developing countries the opportunity of providing information about themselves internally and internationally.

26. She therefore advocated a new international information order, which should not be misconstrued as an attempt to undermine the principle of freedom of the press, but rather as the manifestation of a desire to make that freedom universal. It was necessary to strengthen the information and communication infrastructure of the developing countries. In that regard, she wished to commend the efforts of UNESCO to mobilize support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication.

27. The Department of Public Information had an important role to play in implementation of the new international information order and in redressing the present imbalance in the flow of information. She was happy to note that the Department had expanded its links with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and other media bodies in the third world. She commended the Department for its training programme for journalists and broadcasters from developing countries and hoped that the programme would be stepped up in the future.



(Mrs. Amailuk, Uganda)

28. Recently, the United Nations system had been denigrated in a campaign organized by countries like South Africa, which pursued unacceptable policies, such as racism, apartheid and oppression, and had been condemned by the United Nations for violating its Charter. Instead of changing their position, they had attempted to damage the credibility of the Organization and had been joined in that enterprise by groups that had never accepted the emergence of the newly independent and non-aligned countries in the United Nations. As a result, coverage of United Nations activities in the Western news media had been hostile or non-existent.

29. The Department of Public Information had the task of educating international public opinion about the activities of the Organization in order to garner public support. The efforts made by that Department were therefore commendable and all Members should help the Department in that task.

30. The Development Forum had been very instrumental in disseminating information about the new international economic order and the global negotiations. The North-South dialogue had been an important issue in the United Nations for several years. It was surprising that the Forum had been criticized for highlighting that problem and it was regrettable that, as a result, some donors had not made contributions to the publication. Her delegation supported the report of the Committee on Information and its recommendations.

31. Mr. GHAFFAR (Bahrain) said that the establishment of a new information order was closely linked to the establishment of a new economic order, and no progress had been made in that direction because of the imbalance that existed in the structure of economic relations between the industrialized and developing countries. The new information order could not be established unless international economic relations as a whole, which were entirely at variance with the principles of the new economic order, were modified.

32. Technological developments in the news media had made the exchange of cultural and scientific information between peoples possible. That exchange must serve the interests of international peace and understanding within the framework of a new information order characterized by justice and the free and uncontrolled dissemination of news.

33. The delegation of Bahrain wished to make a few comments on the reports contained in documents A/37/446, A/37/453 and A/37/21. The Department of Public Information had not paid due attention to the struggle of the Palestinians for self-determination and against the racism and zionism of Israel. Several seminars on that topic had been held under the auspices of the United Nations, but the Department of Public Information had not provided detailed news about them. The Department of Public Information was not duly concerned with the problem of the Palestinian people, which the United Nations had been endeavouring to solve since 1947. He supported the Egyptian proposal that the Secretary-General should conduct a study on the existing situation, in view of the tragic events in Lebanon and the situation existing between the Palestinians and the Lebanese.

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(Mr. Ghaffar, Bahrain)

34. His country supported the strengthening of the United Nations Information Centres. The qualitative aspect in particular should be stressed, and complete information, not only articles in newspapers and local magazines, should be published. There must be ongoing contact with the public, especially in countries where local newspapers falsified the image of the United Nations because of the support it gave to the struggle of the Palestinian people and Namibia. Likewise, greater importance should be given to the matter of staff in the Arabic broadcasting service of the Department of Public Information in order to improve its technical capacity, in terms of not only the number of staff but also the quality of services.

35. Mr. BA-ISSA (Democratic Yemen) said that the world had been aware of the potential of information for some time, especially since the information process had become more complex and, consequently, the work of the United Nations in that area had taken on greater importance. The developing countries, which had struggled for their sovereignty and independence, were now struggling to change the political system and to extricate themselves from their situation of dependence and exploitation. When they had asked for a new economic order, they had seen that the way ahead was long and arduous. Developing countries wanted a new world information and communication order because they realized that it was part of the global system of international relations and a predominant part of people's education and their ideas about the world. That was especially important for developing countries where many problems existed with regard to education. Colonialism had left behind vestiges which must be eliminated and the media had long dominated those countries, which were still suffering the consequences of that situation.

36. The industrialized countries circulated 80 per cent of the news, with only 10 or 20 per cent referring to the developing countries. If there was to be the freedom of information which was so often called for, it was necessary to prevent some countries from influencing others and that freedom must be based on mutual respect. Freedom of information was not an end in itself and presupposed legality, justice and objectivity. The Department of Public Information must assume its responsibilities to change the situation which was a legacy of the past. The change must take place in both the structure of the Department of Public Information and the scope of its activities and policies, which should focus on issues such as peace and security, apartheid, racism in all its forms and efforts to establish a new international economic order. It was useless to disseminate information against developing countries or the socialist countries or to broadcast tendentious programmes like those of Radio Free Europe or those against Cuba. These media invoked the argument of freedom of information but helped to create a cold war climate.

37. The image of the United Nations had been distorted and Western information media were contributing to that distortion by emphasizing negative aspects instead of mentioning the efforts made by the United Nations in the economic and social sphere, which formed the most important part of its activities.

(Mr. Ba-Issa, Democratic Yemen)

38. He paid tribute to the efforts being made by the Department of Public Information in following the guidelines drawn up in the Committee. It was particularly important to deal with such fundamental causes as the legitimate rights of peoples and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. His delegation was opposed to Zionist policies and the criminal practices of the South African régime; people should not be afraid of threats or blackmail.

39. His delegation wished to make clear the value it attached to the reports submitted by the Committee on Information (A/37/21), the Secretary-General (A/37/446) and the Director-General of UNESCO (A/37/453) and at the same time to emphasize several aspects which could strengthen United Nations information policy and help to rectify the current situation, especially with regard to the needs of developing countries for the resources and facilities to develop their national information systems.

40. The first of those aspects was a matter of establishing information infrastructures in the developing countries and helping them to implement their national policies in that field, emphasizing the principle of self-help in the training of personnel. In addition, good co-operation should be ensured among information agencies, mainly at regional levels, so that they would be better able to respond to the needs of their public; at the same time, relations should be established between the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the pool of regional agencies, in particular by encouraging co-operation with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies which was transmitting information to more than 80 countries

41. Other important aspects included correcting the unjust imbalance in the manning table of DPI, at the same time making better use of that Department's potential so as to accomplish the tasks entrusted to it more effectively, and enabling the United Nations to acquire the most modern facilities of all kinds so that the Organization could free itself from its current dependence and transmit its messages independently.

42. Finally, it was important also to strengthen the monthly publications which reviewed the activities of the United Nations at all levels (regrettably, traditional contributors were currently hesitating to make funds available for those publications) and to expand and strengthen the information units dealing with the Middle East and the Arab countries. His delegation hoped that the measures adopted by UNESCO gh its centres for  
vocational training in radio broadcasting would also apply so far as the Arabic language was concerned.

43. Mr. VILLAR (Spain) said that information played a role of prime importance in the social and political life of his country and in the coexistence of its people, and that article 20 of the Spanish Constitution recognized and protected the right to communicate and receive truthful information freely by any means of dissemination. The information media in his country had played an outstanding role in the process of transition from an authoritarian régime to a democratic system and were still playing the same role in consolidating that system.

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(Mr. Villar, Spain)

44. His delegation was aware that various ideas existed on such a complex matter as information, and it believed that the Special Political Committee was not the right place in which to turn the issue into a missile in the ideological confrontation which was once again rending the world with particular intensity. Rather than emphasize what divided people, it was time to try to discover what united them and to see how co-operation and understanding among peoples could be strengthened by means of information.

45. The Secretary-General, in his statement to the opening meeting of the Committee on Information for 1982, had summed up the essence of the United Nations information role very wisely when he had said that information was a crucial element, first, because it coloured perceptions and interpretations of the political and economic problems with which people dealt and, secondly, because information affected the group behaviour of societies and States. While agreeing with the Chairman of the Committee on Information, Ambassador Albornoz, that the United Nations system could not and should not become a mechanism for self-advertisement, his delegation believed that the system must make world public opinion aware of all those successes which, together with its undeniable failures, comprised United Nations activities in fields as widespread and varied as development aid, scientific and technical co-operation, disarmament, human rights, decolonization, the struggle against racism and apartheid, etc. The Department of Public Information could perform outstanding work in implementing that task within the restraints of its very limited resources. Ideas about what could and should be expected from the United Nations, an essential instrument for making Governments try to settle their disputes and tackle common problems, should also be better informed.

46. But, together with the strengthening of the image of the United Nations at a time when it was frequently subjected to attacks not always resulting from ignorance about its nature and powers of action, there was another essential aspect: the contribution which the United Nations could make to the requisite modification of the world information order. His delegation understood the concern that the developing countries had been voicing in various forums for many years about a world information order which, under a cloak of freedom, concealed a real situation of dependence which rendered that freedom meaningless. His delegation therefore supported a new world information and communication order which must be qualified by the adjectives "free" and "balanced". The Committee on Information, to which his country had belonged from the beginning, was concentrating precisely on that problem and was an example of how a lowest common denominator could be found, starting from very different and at times even opposed ideas. The 43 recommendations adopted by consensus at the end of the Committee's latest meeting were a recent proof of that. His delegation wished to single out from all those recommendations the one referring to strengthening the activities of DPI, and to underline the need for that Department to continue and intensify its efforts to rectify the existing imbalance of its manning table and the imbalance in the use of the official languages. In that regard, his delegation noted the recent recruitment of a Spanish-speaking information officer to produce information material in Spanish for United Nations Information Centres. That measure echoed

(Mr. Villar, Spain)

the concern expressed by some delegations during the previous session. Any additional effort by DPI to achieve a better balance in the use of the official languages, and specifically of Spanish, would be welcome and would have the support of his delegation, which likewise welcomed the progress recorded in the report of the Secretary-General (A/37/446). That progress related specifically to strengthening the radio and visual services; strengthening information centres; the problems of financing Development Forum; co-operation with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and with the regional press agencies of the developing countries, and training programmes for journalists and radio broadcasting personnel from those countries.

47. His delegation also wished to praise the efforts being made by UNESCO in the information and communication field, and specifically in implementing the aim of a new world information order. Those efforts, especially those relating to the implementation of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) should be continued and intensified in close co-operation with DPI.

48. In conclusion, his delegation hoped that at the end of the discussions it would be possible to adopt by consensus a draft resolution on questions relating to information.

49. Mr. CARAZO (Venezuela) said that one question was a cause of major concern for all those connected with the United Nations: the fact that at the present time its image in the eyes of international public opinion had been shattered. The United Nations limitations in carrying out its prime function of maintaining international peace and security, as noted by the Secretary-General in his recent report on the work of the Organization, were well known, but at the same time there must be complete awareness that the effectiveness of the United Nations also depended to a great extent on the image which it projected, and that image was not going to be enhanced by emphasizing its difficulties, shortcomings or failures. On that matter, he cited the words of the Venezuelan Minister for Foreign Affairs, who had told the plenary meeting of the General Assembly that the ability to use properly the means now available to the Organization for responding to the grave problems confronting mankind depended to a decisive degree on those States which enjoyed the privilege of being permanent members of the Security Council.

50. The limitations which the United Nations was currently experiencing made it especially necessary for the Governments of Member States, through their media, to make efforts which would greatly benefit the United Nations by devoting more space and time to publicizing and commenting on its work. Venezuela was committed to efforts to establish a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order which would strengthen international peace and understanding. In order to achieve that new order, however, changes were required, including, as indispensable aspects of improved understanding and rapprochement among peoples, the reduction of the dependence of the developing countries in the field of information and communication and the democratization of information and communication to allow free and equal access to them without prejudice to national sovereignty. It was essential that, in promoting the establishment of a new world

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(Mr. Carazo, Venezuela)

information order, there be no duplication of effort by the Committee on Information and international organizations, in order to avoid overlapping and thus make more efficient use of the human and financial resources possessed by those organizations.

51. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/37/446, which referred to efforts made within the Department of Public Information to comply with the mandate given to it by the General Assembly, his delegation hoped that those efforts would be continued in order to achieve a balance in the use of the official languages of the United Nations in the Department's publications and programmes. The Spanish language was spoken by nearly 300 million people in at least 25 countries and should be treated accordingly.

52. Venezuela believed that the United Nations Information Centres were one of the principal means of publicizing the work of the United Nations and of improving co-operation between the Organization and Member States. He endorsed recommendation 22 made by the Committee on Information at its most recent session, a recommendation which reiterated the one contained in General Assembly resolution 36/149. Venezuela was prepared to contribute to the strengthening of the Centres, as advocated in that recommendation.

53. His delegation shared the view of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information that the mandates given to the Department of Public Information should be balanced reasonably with the actual possibilities for carrying them out and that, in view of the Department's shortage of human and financial resources, more efficient use of its resources should be stressed.

54. The programmes and publications of the Department of Public Information should continue to give priority to United Nations efforts relating to disarmament, the struggle against apartheid and support for the independence of Namibia, as well as to economic, social and cultural matters. The mobilization of public opinion was indispensable for the attainment of objectives to which the majority of mankind could subscribe if it received greater encouragement to do so. At one of its future meetings, the Committee on Information should analyse carefully the extent to which earlier General Assembly resolutions on information had been implemented and should ultimately concentrate its work in those fields where the chances of success were the greatest.

55. His delegation welcomed the fact that the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) had begun to function satisfactorily, and hoped that it would make a positive contribution to the elimination of the imbalances and inequalities separating countries in the matter of communication. As part of its active participation in the efforts to establish a new world information and communication order, Venezuela had fully supported the establishment of the Latin American Special Information Services Agency (ALASEI), the launching of which would undoubtedly stimulate regional co-operation in that field.

56. World Communications Year would be celebrated in 1983, and Venezuela hoped

(Mr. Carazo, Venezuela)

that such an important event would guarantee the exercise of fundamental human freedoms, such as the freedoms of opinion, expression and information, and that the communications media throughout the world would make a substantial contribution to the struggle against racism, apartheid, colonialism, war propaganda and cultural infiltration and promote cultural communication and contact between peoples and the strengthening of democracy, freedom and peace.

57. Mr. ADHAMI (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the Secretary-General's election had generated optimism, since he represented a third world country and was fully aware of the aspirations of the developing countries, especially in the field of information. The Secretary-General had demonstrated his interest in the image which the United Nations projected to the world and he wanted United Nations information services to reflect faithfully the work of the Organization. His delegation commended the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information on the positive elements mentioned in his introductory statement and endorsed his views.

58. The public had a negative image of the United Nations. In recent years, the United Nations had been the victim of unjust campaigns, primarily initiated by the United States press, which did not reflect the true situation. When the United Nations had comprised a minority of States and over two thirds of the world had not been Members and when the industrialized Western States had dominated it and enjoyed an automatic majority, the Organization had been represented in the press of Western countries as an indispensable institution. But once the membership had increased with the accession to independence of many countries and when those countries had banded together in the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77, the image of the United Nations had changed. When the Organization had started to represent the aspirations of the countries of the world and had concerned itself with well-being, peace, progress and development, it had been labelled a corrupt organization and its democratic system had been subjected to unjustified attacks. The world had witnessed a campaign caused by the negative and harmful impact of Zionist and racist pressure on political institutions and information media. One wondered what resources were available to the international community.

59. The Chairman of the Committee on Information had presented an objective analysis which showed that the United Nations was not responsible for the negative image which some information media tried to give it, but that the responsibility rested rather with certain States that were blind to frank, sincere and objective approaches which did not distort reality. The solution to the problem was not to be found in an expansion of the international bureaucracy or in the publication of certain texts on information. What was needed was the immediate and wide dissemination of information.

60. Referring to the establishment of a new world information and communication order, he said that the efforts of the developing countries must be recognized. Some information media in the industrialized countries refused to co-operate in the establishment of the new order and had turned their backs on the developing countries. The interest which the third world countries attached to international peace and security and to the development and improvement of the living conditions of peoples should be publicized.

(Mr. Adhami, Syrian Arab Republic)

61. With regard to technology, free flows of information had been mentioned, but that meant that the Western media would continue to invade the developing countries. Regional co-operation should be intensified and attempts made to create an information and communication infrastructure in the developing countries. The unanimous adoption of the 42 recommendations of the Committee on Information indicated that, where the necessary political will existed, it was possible to reach agreement, despite the differences of opinion which might exist.

62. The Syrian Arab Republic attached great importance to equitable geographical distribution in the Department of Public Information. In view of the Department's very special mandate, a solution to that problem must be found there and in other Secretariat departments which continued to suffer absolute Western domination.

63. With regard to the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division, it was difficult to reach agreement, especially because of the obstructionist policy practised within the Department of Public Information. There was a crisis of confidence and a useless confrontation was taking place between delegations and the Department. That confrontation was detailed in paragraphs 42 and 46 of the report (A/37/21).

64. The General Assembly had invited the Secretary-General to elaborate a plan for the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division, in a manner that would permit each section to be responsible for the programmes for its respective region. In that context, it was not possible to disregard the decision of the General Assembly, which itself could not be satisfied with the mere approval of principles. The Group of 77 had wanted the Secretary-General and the Department to deal with equitable geographical distribution without having to wait for the retirement of certain staff members. It was obvious that the situation existing in the Radio and Visual Services Division should be corrected immediately and also that the measures adopted by the Department of Public Information violated some provisions of the General Assembly. Incidentally, delegations were frequently unable to verify the accuracy of the information presented by the Department to the Committee.

65. The Middle East/Arabic Unit of the Radio Service was the only unit to have produced radio programmes for more than 20 years. The Syrian delegation, at recent sessions of the General Assembly, had reaffirmed the need to strengthen that Unit and to establish a clear mandate concerning the programmes it produced. Nevertheless, at the end of 1979, during the thirty-fourth session of the Assembly, the Department had resorted to manoeuvres to transfer the visual media production functions of the Middle East/Arabic Unit elsewhere without any justification and without having received any request, in violation of Assembly decisions. However, the Arab countries had expressed their opposition to such measures. In recommendation 31 of the report (A/37/21), the Secretary-General was asked to maintain and enhance the functions of the Middle East/Arabic Unit in the Radio Service as the producer of television and radio programmes for the Arabic-speaking countries and to enlarge it through the redeployment of existing resources.



(Mr. Adhami, Syrian Arab Republic)

According to paragraph 5 (c) of document A/37/446, it was possible to increase the programme output of that unit with its existing staff resources. However, the Department had not heeded the recommendation of the Committee on Information, in spite of its unanimous adoption. The delegations of the Arab countries had expressed their views in that connection, and DPI had not taken them into account. The Department was dominated by Western civil servants and the delegation of Syria was opposed to that deliberate policy, which was contrary to the interests of the Arab countries, and reiterated that recommendation 31 of the Committee on Information must be applied.

66. Mrs. MUSENGESHI MUSAU (Zaire) said that her country fully supported the promotion of the new world information and communication order because it was essential to improve communications, on the one hand, between the North and the South with a view to achieving technical co-operation which would help the South to accelerate its development and, on the other hand, from the South to the North so that there would be better mutual understanding of different cultures.

67. The United Nations Department of Public Information must serve as a universal model and should reinforce its structures and activities to disseminate information on the Organization more consistently, particularly in the priority areas listed in section III, paragraph 1, of General Assembly resolution 35/201. Zaire had made available its radio-broadcasting facilities to the Department for the broadcasting of programmes relating to the struggle against apartheid and racial discrimination, and programmes on decolonization, disarmament, international peace and security, the participation of women in the struggle for peace and their integration in development. The Department of Public Information should work closely with the agencies of the United Nations system at their headquarters and in the field in order to avoid duplication and waste of time and resources. It was therefore encouraging that the Department had strengthened its ties with UNESCO. It was hoped that the International Programme for the Development of Communication would contribute to the establishment of the new information order. The Department of Public Information should step up its efforts to redress the imbalance in the composition of its staff.

68. Her delegation expressed its satisfaction that two other Information Centres would be inaugurated in Africa in 1983 and the hope that it would also be possible to strengthen the Centre in Zaire by adding skilled staff. Regionalization was necessary to achieve a better geographical distribution of staff. At its most recent session the Committee on Information had requested the reinforcement of the African Unit of the Radio Service so that it could broadcast programmes in Lingala, a language spoken in several African countries and an important means of communication for the development of rural areas.

69. Development Forum should continue to be published and the United Nations should acquire its own communications satellite, which would be able to broadcast scientific, economic and cultural programmes in Lingala. Co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the African National Television and Broadcasting Union and the Pan-African News Agency was essential to achieve that end. The Department should be guided by recommendation 3, formulated by the Committee on Information at its most recent session.

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70. Mr. ATTBULI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) urged the Committee on Information to redouble its efforts, in co-operation with UNESCO, to promote the new international information order by creating just conditions and eliminating the disparity which existed between the developing and developed countries. Because of their dominant position, news agencies of the industrialized countries controlled 80 per cent of the world news, with only 10 to 30 per cent pertaining to developing countries.

71. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya advocated freedom of information: but it must be information based on equity and not information from monopolies, based on the falsification of facts. It reaffirmed its desire to put an end to attacks made on developing countries through the media. It was also necessary to neutralize the one-way trend in the flow of information, whereby the developing countries were merely consumers or receivers of news. It was important to give fuller consideration to the efforts of developing countries.

72. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, as a free country, rejected dependence and continued to suffer from the effects of domination of the news media, which tried to sully its image, particularly the news media of the United States, which yielded to Zionist pressures.

73. A veritable campaign had been launched against the United Nations and, on 14 October 1982, the New York Times had published an article in which it was said that the General Assembly was a joke. For its part, the Government of the United States was waging psychological warfare through broadcasts of the kind made by Radio Free Europe and programmes against Cuba and Poland, which constituted a threat to peace and interference in the internal affairs of independent States.

74. The section of the report of the Committee on Information on substantive sessions said that journalists who were fanatical, indifferent or ignorant of the situation and history of the developing countries sowed conflict and divisiveness, which weakened information networks. Given that fact, the developing countries should multiply their efforts to improve the economic and social development process.

75. The massacres perpetrated by the Zionists in Lebanon during the summer of 1982 were so horrible that even the imperialist information media were obliged to show pictures of those abominable crimes, but even that had been done in a way which was not consistent with the scope of the crimes committed and, at times, not even with reality.

76. His delegation regretted that no progress had been made concerning equitable geographical distribution in the staffing of DPI, where the composition of the staff was a legacy of the past when the United Nations had consisted primarily of developed countries. That imbalance should be remedied so that the Department might better fulfill its functions and attach greater importance to the oppressed peoples, in particular the Palestinian people, who were being subjected to something resembling extermination in their own occupied national territory.

(Mr. Attbuli, Libyan  
Arab Jamahiriya)

77. The Libyan delegation reiterated the appeal made to the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and the Director-General of UNESCO to use Arabic in their respective publications and programmes, and hoped that the Under-Secretary-General would decide in favour of the Arabic Unit of the Radio and Visual Services Division. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya supported the efforts of the Committee on Information and repeated its willingness to co-operate with DPI.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.