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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MUBAREZ (Yemen)

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REQUEST FOR HEARINGS

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

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

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

1. Miss ZAHARNA (Observer for the Palestine Liberation Organization) welcomed the growing awareness and in-depth exploration that had characterized the Committee's consideration of questions relating to information at the current session.
2. The Palestinian people wished to share with the Committee its own immediate encounter with the world's mass media. The recent Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the suffering inflicted on the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples might almost have been made for television, for, while media coverage of human progress and long-term development projects was a long, tedious and complex matter, war and human destruction on a grand scale provided all the essential elements of drama, tension and excitement. As the Palestinians had watched the events of the summer of 1982 on television, however, they had watched themselves and their own drama: Israeli tanks, Israeli war planes, vivid colour, the noise of bombs exploding and buildings bursting apart, agonizing screams and ambulance sirens, long silences and stills of bloated bodies. The Palestinian people had added that global media experience to its own immediate history and culture.
3. Because its own awareness had been heightened by the experience, her delegation urged the initiation of a documented study on the mass media's coverage of the recent tragic events in Lebanon. Such a study would add to the international community's experience in the field of communication and information by helping to expose some of the latent cultural baggage transmitted over the mass media in the immediacy of live broadcasts of traumatic events. The events in Lebanon, the atrocities against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples, had not been "made for television". Changing the channel had not ended the war or the suffering. The mass media, however, had not bothered to report on what had happened afterwards to real people, to their lives and to the children who survived the war. It was doubtful whether the tragedy brought to the public via the media had been committed to immediate living memory before it escaped by the same means. The media had moreover flaunted their power by focusing the public's attention on selected events and selected images, establishing an order of priority in the information it passed on. Information had been simplified in order that it might be more easily categorized. A study of the mass media's coverage would thus yield valuable insights. It was her delegation's ultimate hope that communication skills would be so used as to make enthusiastic mass media coverage of human development and progress more exciting and dramatic than the destruction witnessed in recent months.

(Miss Zaharna, Observer, PLO)

4. The Palestinians had watched with keen interest as the Western mass media had experienced at first hand the great fallacy of the Zionist propaganda myth, namely, the contradiction between the Zionists' Western notion of democracy and "freedom of the press" and their vision of Israel as "the democracy" in the Middle East on the one hand, and Israel's deliberate policy of press censorship, on the other. The realization that such censorship was not militarily but politically motivated had been a further revelation.

5. There was also the Palestinian people's experience of information and communication under foreign military occupation. Israeli occupation had affected every possible aspect of human communication. Any Palestinian attempt to express national identity and pride was countered by the issuance of an Israeli military order. Thus, in the Palestinian mass media, Al Fajr, the only English-language weekly bringing news directly from the occupied Palestinian territories, had been banned for several weeks. Palestinian reporters always submitted more material than was required because a quarter of such material was routinely cut by Israeli censors. Israeli military authorities had prevented three Palestinian newspaper editors from travelling anywhere in the West Bank, including Jerusalem where their offices were located. Some urgent news items had to pass through the Israeli press before they were even considered for Palestinian consumption.

6. The activities of UNESCO and the international community in the field of communication had done much to highlight the implications of Israeli occupation not only for the Palestinians but for the shared cultural wealth of mankind and future generations. Culture and education had long been two primary targets of the Israeli authorities. Pursuant to Israeli military order No. 854, all institutions of higher education came under the jurisdiction of the military authorities who also had to approve all textbooks, syllabi and curricula, and approximately 3,000 books, including works by Shakespeare, Abraham Lincoln and Alexander the Great had been banned. The Israeli occupation authorities thus deprived Palestinian students not only of their own historical and cultural heritage but of that of the outside world. When the Israeli Defence Forces had looted the Palestine Research Institute in Beirut, more than just books and papers had been stolen, for the Institute had been one of the largest archives of Palestinian documents. The symbols of national culture and identity were hunted down with special assiduity by the occupying authority. A 15-year-old girl had been arrested for possessing a collection of her own poems in which the word "Palestine" was used. While the Palestinian people's irrepressible desire for national identity sought out every possible channel of expression, the very notion of such an identity threatened the Israeli concept of occupation and the occupying Power, therefore, wielded its authority to block every outlet.

7. On the basis of its people's own experience, her delegation wished to stress the continuing need for training programmes to strengthen the Palestinians' most valuable communication resource. Amid the ravages of war and foreign occupation, the acquisition of knowledge and skills through education was an asset that, unlike land or property, could not be confiscated. UNESCO and DPI must continue to expand information and communication training opportunities. In calling on DPI to assure

(Miss Zaharna, Observer, PLO)

equitable distribution of its staff, her delegation was also calling for the utilization of competent Palestinian manpower. That was a call which, she trusted, DPI would not allow to go unheeded for much longer.

8. Her delegation wished to pay a tribute to the work done by the Committee on Information in conjunction with DPI and other international communication networks such as the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, to help redress the communication and information imbalance between developed and the developing countries.

9. Her delegation trusted that DPI would implement, as a matter of urgency, the General Assembly resolution calling for a permanent exhibit on the atrocities and acts of genocide committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. It also hoped that DPI would move with greater speed in informing public opinion about the Palestinian question, in particular by publicizing the various United Nations decisions on the Palestinians' inalienable and internationally recognized rights.

10. With regard to the question of the United Nations public image, the mass media did, indeed, have the ability to focus attention specifically on negative elements at the expense of positive ones, but, since 80 percent of the work of the United Nations related to the economic, social and cultural fields, DPI should be able to use the Organization's achievements in those areas to project a positive image.

11. Mr. SCHLEGEL (German Democratic Republic) said that the intellectual climate of co-operation among States was determined to a considerable extent by the international exchange of information. The responsibility of the information media and of information producers was increased in times of international tension, raising the question of the content and objectives of media policies. If those policies were to be aimed at, for instance, denouncing nuclear weapons doctrines, promoting understanding and co-operation and fighting racism and racial discrimination, rather than the opposite, international rules of conduct must be drawn up for the information media on the basis of such generally accepted principles of international law as respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their internal affairs.

12. That did not, of course, mean eliminating peaceful ideological competition between political systems but rather that such competition should be conducted in accordance with a framework such as that set out by the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference. The Final Act made it incumbent on States, and on media operating in or from territory under their jurisdiction, to refrain from psychological warfare, ideological subversion and interference in other countries' internal affairs. Technical and technological dominance in the field of information did not offer a dispensation for unbridled ideological subversion against other States. His delegation was therefore profoundly concerned at reports that the United States Government planned to intensify its "crusade against communism" using such broadcasting stations as "Voice of America", "Radio Free Europe", "Radio Liberty" and "Radio Marti". In the case of "Voice of America" alone, annual expenditures on ideological subversion against sovereign countries came to roughly \$110 million.

(Mr. Schlegel, German Democratic Republic)

13. Gross violations of the Helsinki Final Act were also to be found in a paper which one delegation had, contrary to established procedures, distributed in the Committee. Not only was that paper conducive to the imperialist media's policy of interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, including his own, under the banner of so-called "freedom of opinion", but it also falsified generally known political realities in Central Europe.

14. State responsibility for the content of information implied resolute action to suppress any abuse of the media. Those opposed to such clear-cut norms for the establishment of a new international information order carried on their activities under the guise of "freedom of information". What they deliberately omitted to mention was that a "free flow of information" presupposed the transfer of responsibility for the means of communication to society as a whole. The vast majority of the imperialist media were being used by commercially oriented groups and transnational corporations against the interests of their own peoples. A handful of imperialist corporations controlled between 80 and 90 per cent of the channels for gathering and disseminating information and the same proportion of the manufacture of and market for the technical means of transmission of information. Those corporations, in co-ordination with their governments, ensured that only information benefiting the interests of the ruling class in their respective countries was circulated. Proof of that situation was to be found in the Western media's totally distorted reporting on political and economic development processes in the socialist and developing countries, or the negative manner in which they portrayed the activities of the United Nations.

15. IPDC should help to overcome the ideological, spiritual, cultural and material dominance of the imperialist media corporations by helping to create independent national information systems which would enable the developing countries to participate on an equal footing in the international exchange of information. IPDC should also provide a vehicle for media training programmes for students from developing countries. In that connection, the Berlin International Journalistic Institute "Solidarity School" had trained several hundred journalists from almost 50 developing countries since its creation in 1963.

16. His delegation believed that the activities of DPI must be based on the relevant decisions of the United Nations and give priority to the latter's main concerns and goals. An overall policy with regard to the content of all DPI's work must be defined. Effective and rational use must be made of the resources and capacities available in DPI, and the information capacities of the United Nations system as a whole must be co-ordinated. Efficiency and quality must be the yardstick for all DPI operations, and a more equitable geographical distribution of posts must be achieved in order to redress the underrepresentation of the non-aligned countries and socialist States in DPI.

17. The Committee on Information should give a still clearer profile to its contribution to the establishment of a new international information order, giving priority to the establishment of norms for the conduct of international relations in the field of information in line with the principles of international law. His delegation would continue to contribute actively to the establishment of principles which would make it incumbent on the mass media to work for peace, understanding and co-operation among States.

18. Mr. AZAZI (Yemen) said that his country, as one of the developing countries, was of the view that the establishment of a new and more just world information order would bring about security, stability and closer relations among peoples and would serve the purposes of economic and social development. The new order should be characterized by the balanced, true and faithful dissemination of information on issues of concern to the oppressed peoples so that the international community would be able to view the facts as they really were. His delegation was bound by the resolutions of the Conferences of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries held in 1973, 1976 and 1979, which gave true expression to the aspirations of small and developing countries for the establishment of a new world information order. Welcome initiatives had been taken over the previous two years in deliberations on the topic, and the broad outlines of the new order were beginning to emerge. Although the desired objective had not yet been reached, persistent effort through international conferences and the relevant organizations would, undoubtedly, contribute to the formulation of appropriate ideas and concepts so that a balanced and reasonable definition could be arrived at that would meet with the agreement of all States. All should support the efforts of UNESCO to promote the establishment of a new world information order.

19. The international community had, over the past six months, witnessed the succession of tragic events following the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the savage massacres to which unarmed Palestinians had been subjected. That tragedy had proved in a manner that left no room for doubt that the establishment of a new world information and communication order had become a matter of urgency for all States which loved peace, justice and truth. All had seen, through the American mass media, how the Israeli occupation authorities had not permitted any news of the massacres they had perpetrated to pass without censorship. Large numbers of journalists had been subjected to harassment by the occupation authorities. The Western mass media, subjected as they were to Zionist influence, persisted in the organized brain-washing of the European peoples in order to make them side with Israel which, while claiming to be a meek and peace-loving nation, turned its back on what had happened and was continuing to happen in Lebanon and occupied Palestine. It should also not be forgotten that the Western mass media had collaborated with the racist régime in South Africa. The developing countries, in demanding and insisting upon the establishment of a new world information and communication order, were motivated only by concern for the protection of their legitimate desires and the building of strong and firm relations among the peoples of the world, characterized by co-operation for the achievement of the welfare and prosperity of the international community.

20. His delegation endorsed the statement in paragraph 20 of document A/37/174 that the Joint United Nations Information Committee had made an essential contribution to the work of the Committee on Information.

21. With regard to document A/37/446, his delegation was particularly appreciative of the developments reported there on the strengthening of radio and visual services. Development Forum should continue to appear and his delegation appealed to States and to the specialized agencies to increase their voluntary contributions for that purpose. Practical steps should be taken to increase co-operation with

(Mr. Azazi, Yemen)

news organizations, and DPI had already done a great deal in that regard. The training programme for journalists and broadcasters should continue and be further developed so as to fulfil the purpose for which it was established.

22. UNESCO, as was evident from document A/37/453, was making great efforts to support the development process and to improve the information media of the developing countries through training programmes and projects to enable them to benefit from the latest technology in the communications field.

23. The recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21) represented a compromise formulation but were nevertheless a considerable accomplishment.

24. The Department of Public Information should observe a balance in the use of languages in the United Nations information services and should redress the imbalance in the geographical composition of its staff. It should disseminate information on United Nations activities and, in particular, on those relating to the peoples of Palestine and Namibia. In that connection, his delegation strongly supported the proposal made by the representative of Egypt that the Secretary-General should undertake to prepare a study on the reaction of the world information media to the recent tragic events in Lebanon and the massacres perpetrated against unarmed civilians. DPI should henceforth ensure that its resources were allocated in an equitable manner to high-priority information activities. While disarmament was a matter of priority, the slaughter of the Palestinian people was also a matter of urgency and importance. The Arabic Unit of DPI should receive all necessary support in terms of human and financial resources.

25. Mr. BATAINAH (Jordan) said that there was no difference of opinion within the Committee on the importance of information or on the essential role which the various information media could play in the service of objectives enshrined in the Charter, for whose realization all mankind was striving. The Committee, UNESCO and the Conferences of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries had all contributed to the definition of the principles and concepts on the basis of which it would be possible to establish a new world information order in order to remedy present defects in the world information structure. Those defects had negative repercussions on relations between developing and industrialized countries and on the manner in which the grave challenges confronting the world and the proposed responses to them were understood.

26. Jordan was a fervent advocate of the establishment of a new world information order and had supported all the efforts to that end within the non-aligned movement. His country's interest in the issue stemmed from its realization of the importance of the information media in promoting mutual understanding among peoples and co-operation among States. Such mutual understanding was not possible unless the facts concerning international differences and the positions adopted by different parties were disseminated in an objective manner to the peoples of the world. Whenever a danger was of a universal character affecting all peoples of the world, they had a common interest in knowing the reasons for the aggression,

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(Mr. Batainah, Jordan)

identifying the aggressor and specifying the crime. The transmission of such facts could not take place without a free flow of information based on objectivity, accuracy and impartiality.

27. The noble principle of the free flow of information had often been intentionally abused by the Western media to such an extent as to justify attacks upon it by those who had become its victims. Jordan and the Arab world suffered from abuse of that principle and of the principle of the freedom of the press on the part of the Western information media, a situation whose consequences had become even more harmful because of the astonishing technological progress that had been made in the collection and transmission of information. They had once again become the victims of scientific and technological progress exploited for the purposes of narrow interests. For more than half a century the Middle East had suffered at the hands of the Western media. In addition to disseminating an image of the Arab which was lacking in objectivity, balance and accuracy, they had intentionally created many myths and falsehoods concerning the true nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the question of Palestine. The Western press had persistently distorted all positive and constructive initiatives taken by the Arabs within the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. There was no need to give a detailed account of the bias, prejudice and invention apparent in the Western media in the context of the Middle East problem since everyone witnessed them daily to such an extent that some had almost come to accept them as representing the truth.

28. Only a few weeks previously, Israel had perpetrated an abominable slaughter of unarmed civilians in the Sabra and Shatila camps and, under the terms of articles 43 and 47 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel was responsible as being in occupation of that part of Lebanese territory. Nevertheless, the information media had given no prominence to that fact. Moreover, although Israel possessed the greatest military and nuclear striking force in the Middle East, was occupying the territory of three Arab States and practised, with regard to the Palestinian people, the most abominable forms of terrorism and oppression, the major portion of the Western press nevertheless continued to give priority to Israel's security and its recognition by the Arabs. The destruction of the Palestinian people through the occupation of its land and its expulsion, the destruction of Lebanon and the threat posed to all Arab States attracted only passing and superficial attention in the course of asserting the priorities of the aggressor. The United Nations, which had brought Israel into existence, had adopted more than 1,000 resolutions on the Palestine question, not a single paragraph of which had been implemented by Israel. Yet what had the Organization done in that respect in the field of information? His delegation commended the proposal made by the delegation of Egypt that the Secretary-General should be requested to undertake a study of the coverage accorded by the world information media to the slaughter perpetrated by Israel against unarmed civilians. That study should be disseminated through the Radio and Visual Services Division and the United Nations Information Centres in all the languages used by them.

(Mr. Batainah, Jordan)

29. His delegation repeated its request that DPI should cover all the activities of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and should make all the necessary arrangements for the celebration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People and for its full coverage by the information services.

30. The fact that Jordan suffered from the abuse of the principle of the free flow of information would never prevent it from supporting that principle and considering it as the basis for the establishment of a new world information order. His delegation supported the strengthening of the information services of the United Nations so that they could play a prominent role in that connection. It also supported and encouraged increased co-operation among the non-aligned countries in the field of information and welcomed co-operation between DPI and the news agencies of those countries. There should also be closer co-ordination between DPI and its counterparts in the regional organizations. His delegation hoped that DPI would carry over the existing co-operation between the United Nations and the League of Arab States into a corresponding co-operation with the League's information services.

31. UNESCO had made notable efforts for the establishment of a new world information order by finding ways and means of dissipating the atmosphere of tension and mistrust prevailing among States and peoples, promoting mutual understanding and co-operation and using science and technology to serve mankind and not to enslave it. A new order could not be established without the development of the technical capacities of the information media in the developing countries and enhancement of their ability to receive and transmit news and information.

32. The establishment of a new world information order also required the strengthening of the United Nations information centres through a better exploitation of material and human resources and the provision of new funding. There should be a continuing two-way flow of information between the centres and headquarters, co-operation between the centres and the field offices of UNDP and a wider and more balanced use of the official languages. In that connection, there had been a deterioration in the use of the Arabic language in many cases.

33. His delegation supported the plan for the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division presented by the delegation of Yemen in 1981 and subsequently adopted by the Group of 77. It could not understand the justification given by the Secretariat for its rejection of that plan. Moreover, it strongly deplored interference with a plan that had been adopted by the General Assembly under the terms of its resolution 36/149 B. His delegation was concerned by the statement contained in paragraph 45 of document A/37/21 to the effect that DPI had taken it upon itself to prepare another plan and to begin implementation of that plan without the authorization of the Committee or of the General Assembly. It could not accept the assertion that General Assembly resolutions 35/201 and 36/149 had asked for regionalized plans and not for implementation. While appreciating and respecting the opinion of the Secretary-General in the context of consultation

(Mr. Batainah, Jordan)

and advice, his delegation could not accept that the expression of an opinion by the Secretary-General was a precondition for the implementation of General Assembly resolutions. The statement that the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division might dilute the principle of universality of the United Nations was lacking in objectivity and impartiality. His delegation remained open to any constructive proposal based upon the better exploitation of the resources available to DPI and the Organization as a whole. It requested the strengthening and expansion of the Middle East/Arabic Unit and of the other regional units.

34. DPI could play a major role in a renewal of confidence in the United Nations through an equal and effective handling of the challenges facing the international community. It should concentrate on the principles of truth and justice embodied in the Charter, total commitment to objectivity and impartiality, the dissemination of all the facts concerning the questions of disarmament, the new international economic order, human rights and the struggle against racism and racial discrimination in all its forms, including zionism, and should expose those, such as Israel, who rebelled against or rejected the will of the international community.

35. Mr. SIDIK (Indonesia) said that his country had worked consistently for the establishment of a new international information and communication order and, therefore, attached particular importance not only to the reaffirmation of the need for such an order but to the actual steps being taken to establish it.

36. There was an urgent need to alter the developing countries' dependent status in the field of information and communication. Since the essential role of information was to support such countries in the implementation of their development programmes, they must be helped to develop information systems appropriate to and commensurate with those programmes.

37. His delegation agreed that the establishment of a new international information and communication order was an inseparable part of the establishment of the new international economic order. It therefore welcomed recommendations 4 and 5 of the Committee on Information. Recommendations 11 to 14 should contribute to the integration of information-related tasks within the United Nations system, as should an enhanced role for the Joint United Nations Information Committee.

38. For too long, a handful of news organizations had controlled the content of reporting on the developing countries and on their economic development efforts. DPI must, therefore, increase its co-operation with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and the regional news agencies of developing countries. A more balanced communication network and more equitable flow of information would break the cycle of dependence. The recommendation that DPI should receive, and indeed give prominence to the content of, daily dispatches from the Pool would go a long way towards ensuring greater balance in the sources of information used by DPI and also set an example for others to follow.

39. His delegation welcomed recommendation 30 on the inclusion of Indonesian among the languages of the Asian Unit of the Radio Service and hoped that existing

(Mr. Sidik, Indonesia)

resources would be adequate to implement the recommendation. The Radio Services represented an important source of impartial information to the developing countries, and Indonesian was spoken or understood by the majority of South-East Asian nations.

40. His delegation believed that DPI should try to ensure more coherent coverage and a better knowledge of the United Nations and its activities in all areas. Since decisions were wholly dependent on the information that one received, there was clearly a close relationship between DPI and the establishment of a new international information and communication order. Failure to grasp that relationship would condemn the peoples of the world to remain locked into information and communication patterns inherited from the past and would make the search for solutions to the many problems facing the world increasingly difficult. The Committee on Information had managed to identify the main areas needing change. His delegation therefore urged the adoption of the Committee's recommendations, which all Member States must strive to implement.

41. Miss GORDON (Trinidad and Tobago) said that there had emerged a consensus that a new international information and communication order must be based on the free circulation of objective, responsible and balanced information from diverse sources that are freely accessible to all individuals in all States. The disadvantaged position of developing countries vis-à-vis the developed countries in the field of information and communication must be changed in order to establish the new order. In that regard, her delegation expressed satisfaction at the very positive contribution made by UNESCO. The recommendations made to the member States and to the Director-General of UNESCO by the World Conference on Cultural Policies were extremely pertinent. The projects approved by the Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication with regard to the Latin American region would be of great practical value. The Global Satellite Project was a very valuable first step toward correcting the current one-way flow of information. Such an improvement in communication between the world's peoples would build mutual confidence and contribute immeasurably to world peace.

42. Her Government was deeply committed to the United Nations and held the view that in spite of the many criticisms made against it, the United Nations remained the only organizational framework which kept the nations of the world from plunging headlong into anarchy. It was essential that interesting, fair and undistorted information should be disseminated about the functions, goals, achievements and potential of the United Nations in order to correct the negative impressions and prejudices created by biased news coverage. Her delegation, therefore, supported the positive steps taken in that regard by the Department of Public Information. The task of DPI was a difficult one. The resources made available to the Department should be commensurate with the demands made upon it. It was gratifying to note that the efforts to correct the current geographical imbalance within the Department were continuing. It was hoped that there would be more equitable geographical representation and a more balanced distribution of posts between the sexes in the upper echelons of DPI in the future.

(Miss Gordon, Trinidad and Tobago)

43. Her Government fully supported the recommendations of the Committee on Information in document A/37/21. She pointed out that the continuing revolution in information and communication technology had widened the gap between the developed and the developing countries. The power of information must be used in a responsible manner in order to strengthen trust and mutual understanding between peoples.

44. Mr. TAHINDRO (Madagascar) said that, in his report in document A/37/453, the Director-General of UNESCO, in compliance with General Assembly resolution 36/149, had described his organization's efforts to implement the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), as well as a new world information and communication order. His delegation agreed with the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Council of IPDC that it was urgently necessary for IPDC to mobilize its resources so as to make the programme operational as soon as possible and to establish tangible technical co-operation in order to develop professional training, as well as the machinery necessary for communication. In the absence of a satisfactory infrastructure, the concept of freedom of information would be practically meaningless for all those who had no access to the modern media. His delegation also appealed to the Director-General of UNESCO to ask Governments to co-operate in the implementation of IPDC, so as to enable it to carry out the activities proposed by the States members as part of their efforts to develop their communications systems. Furthermore, financing should not be tied to unacceptable political conditions. In that connection, his delegation renewed its support for the resolutions adopted at the twenty-first session of the General Conference of UNESCO, held at Belgrade from October to November 1980, and specifically resolution 21 C/19, which laid the foundations for a new world information and communication order. Among the essential elements of such an order were the free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information, joined with the necessary sense of responsibility on the part of journalists and media experts; the provision to the developing countries of the means required to meet their communications needs; and respect for each people's cultural identity. His delegation also supported the idea that different solutions to the problems of information and communication had to be found to meet the different social, political, cultural and economic conditions of each country.

45. His delegation welcomed the various projects and activities carried out by UNESCO, and particularly the global symposium on the dissemination and exchange of information by satellite, held in Paris in October 1981, as well as UNESCO's co-operation with ITU on the establishment of national news agencies in Africa. His delegation also took note of the fact the UNESCO's draft medium-term plan (1984-1989) had identified as one of the major problems in the field of information the fact that the developing countries had no role in determining the content of information with the result that their views and their problems were not properly reflected in the media. It was in that sense that the relevant provisions of a new world information and communication order must be understood, provisions which aimed at eliminating imbalances and inequalities in sources of information, remedying the harmful effects of certain monopolies and correcting the excessive concentration of the media in the developed countries.

(Mr. Tahindro, Madagascar)

46. While co-operation between UNESCO and the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) seemed to have made a good start, his delegation regretted that the report made no mention of the co-operation which certainly must exist between UNESCO and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies. To cite just one example, the final communiqué of the Ministerial Meeting of the Co-ordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Colombo in June 1979, had stressed the importance of the role of the non-aligned countries in restructuring the existing international information order and had also drawn the international community's attention to the need to decolonize information, to vary the sources of information and to eliminate the inequalities in the international dissemination of information. Furthermore, the Final Declaration of the Sixth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Havana from 3 to 7 September 1979, had also stressed the need for the non-aligned countries to acquire greater independence, to improve their national sources of information and to participate more actively and more broadly in systems of communication and co-operation at the international level. That Conference had also considered that a new world information and communication order should ensure that the dissemination of information was no longer unilateral and that it should help to eliminate imbalances in the exchange of information.

47. In order to prevent any misinterpretation of the new world information order, the dissemination of information should be subordinated to the concern for the sovereignty of the developing countries, which must maintain the right to evaluate the flow of outside information in terms of their national interest, their cultural values and their economic and social imperatives. The media should also strive to make the right to information a part of the struggle of the developing countries to establish a fairer and more equitable society. His delegation had carefully examined the report of the Secretary-General prepared in compliance with General Assembly resolution 36/149 B (A/37/446) and welcomed the activities undertaken by DPI to improve its radio services and the visual media. Accordingly, it noted with appreciation the fact that the African Unit had been expanded so as to enable it to produce programmes in Swahili, in addition to already used languages such as French, English, Portuguese and Somali. It was also pleased to note that DPI was pursuing its commendable efforts to establish co-operation with international, regional and national information organizations and the fact that it had privileged contacts with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and was pursuing its efforts to give the public a better image of the activities of the United Nations.

48. At the present time, information was being so manipulated that the developing countries must profit from the valuable experience of their journalists in order to combat the pernicious propaganda of transnational information media. The training of information specialists in the developing countries must remain one of the priorities of the Department of Public Information.

49. His delegation supported the various recommendations made by the Committee on Information. DPI should continue its efforts to redress the existing imbalance in its staff, particularly in the Radio and Visual Services Division, so as to ensure a more equitable geographical distribution at every level. His delegation fully supported the recommendation that the Department should strengthen the radio

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(Mr. Tahindro, Madagascar)

service of the United Nations with special reference to the African Group and try to produce programmes in the major languages spoken in Africa, in addition to those currently used. It welcomed the fact that Lingala would be the object of special attention and also wished to draw the Committee's attention to the possibility of producing programmes in the Malagasy language, in view of the fact that that language was one of the most important languages in Africa, since it was spoken by more than 10 million people.

50. His delegation supported the renewal of the mandate of the Committee of Information laid down in General Assembly resolution 34/182 and reaffirmed in resolutions 35/20 and 36/149.

51. Mr. LICHENSTEIN (United States of America) said that there was no item on the Committee's agenda to which his delegation attached greater importance than the one on questions relating to information. That reflected the primary importance which the United States Government and people attached to a free and open market-place of ideas and information, disseminated in a balanced, objective, fair and accurate manner. Ideas were the bearers of civilization and the life-blood of the institution of self-government. In his country, a very high standard was, therefore, imposed on the journalists who communicated them. The profound convictions of the American people on the subject were further reflected in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to which he drew attention. All the foregoing considerations should serve as the underlying premises of the Committee's deliberations on the agenda item under consideration.

52. The report of the Committee on Information (A/37/21), although not wholly satisfactory, did signify a hopeful and healthy trend towards emphasis on aiming for consensus. His delegation was disturbed, however, by the reopening of most of the issues that so many in the Committee on Information had worked so hard to resolve. He questioned the efficacy of that Committee's deliberations and its tendency to go over the same ground repeatedly. He hoped that the spirit of consensus could be revived and that it would take hold in the Special Political Committee also.

53. Other disturbing signs called for comment. One of them was the profoundly repugnant, although not surprising, statement by the representative of Cuba, which was a tissue of fabrications and fantasies and deserved only silent contempt. For example, the allegation that INTELSAT was a wholly-owned subsidiary of two major American financial institutions must have come as quite a shock to INTELSAT's Governing Board, most of whose members were officials of Governments represented in the Special Political Committee. The Cuban statement had said nothing about the realities of the burgeoning universe of communications systems presently evolving in the West and around the world, nor about their diverse ownership, nor about the competitive environment in which they operated, nor about the proliferation of services which those systems offered at increasingly reduced unit costs. Those systems were politically and ideologically neutral, and the more there were, the more competitive they were and the more neutral they became. The Cuban representative's fantasy world of capitalist conspiracies and clandestine cartels,

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of information control and the suppression of ideas, did, however, tell one all one needed to know about the Soviet-designed and Soviet-sponsored oppression which Cuba imposed on its own people and sought to export to various parts of the world. His statement and that of the representative of Poland attacked the free flow of ideas and information as interference in their internal affairs and as dangerous to the stability of their régimes. In a way they were right. The only conflict that the Government and people of the United States deliberately sought was with such efforts to stifle freedom; and the ultimate weapon in that conflict was truth, which would inevitably triumph through the free flow of ideas and information.

54. It was ironic and noteworthy that the effort to protect the people of Poland against Western sources of information - in other words, to insulate them from the truth which apparently was so threatening to the martial law régime in that country - took the form of a massive and illegal electronic jamming of Polish-language broadcasts from the West, jamming which originated not in Poland but in the Soviet Union. Those efforts to break through the barriers to truth encircling the captive peoples of the new Soviet colonialism would continue as long as their own rulers denied them access to the free flow of ideas and information.

55. Equally disturbing, even shocking, were two themes contained in the report on public perceptions of the United Nations system in the recent report of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (ACC/1982/22). One was the incredible statement that, in "the socialist countries" (not otherwise specified) the mass media provided regular and continuing support for United Nations efforts directed towards international co-operation. It was incredible that a report produced by the United Nations' own professional information officers could blithely overlook the obvious fact that the socialist and communist mass media did anything but report regularly on General Assembly resolutions on Afghanistan or Cambodia; or United Nations peace-keeping operations and refugee relief efforts, to which the socialist countries contributed almost nothing; or on the full range of human rights resolutions, including the investigation of massive human rights violations in Poland. The explanation lay in the second principal theme of the report, which had to do with "public perceptions" of the United Nations. The report was, in fact, not about information at all; it was about public relations. The confusion between the two, which was as dangerous as it was disturbing, was total. There was much in the United Nations that merited praise and support, but also much that called for criticism and condemnation. A thoughtful and judicious assessment of the United Nations record was a matter of great urgency and called for profound reflection on the part of every Member State and everyone concerned with the peaceful resolution of international disputes and conflicts. It did not call for public relations or image-building. Good performance was its own reward and public perception, reinforced by solid and professional journalism, and through the communication of information rather than propaganda, would take care of itself.

56. His delegation was deeply disturbed by those symptoms of confusion and uncertainty and by the continuing failure of the Department of Public Information to confront the growing problem of how to allocate limited financial and

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professional resources to a wish-list of virtually unlimited dimensions. All Member States paid their proper contributions and must insist on the setting of priorities, on careful management, on fiscal prudence, on zero-based budgeting and on zero budget growth, as his delegation would certainly do.

57. Mr. GONZALEZ-MANET (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply said that the development of modern telecommunications technology had coincided with the formulation of the principles of the new information order by the movement of non-aligned countries. In view of its anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist orientation, the new information order was opposed to the so-called "free flow of information" because of the monopolist practices on which the latter was based. In recent years, the United States had reorganized its strategy for world domination. The increased concentration of wealth in the hands of huge international consortia had already given rise to a new type of capitalism and neo-colonial domination. The creation of a world-wide telecommunications network was essential in order to guarantee the control of the telecommunications industry by the transnational corporations. Under the pressure of the transnational corporations the Government of the United States was endeavouring to bring about such a world telecommunications network. Statements made by a number of high-ranking officials in the Government of the United States had alluded to the vital importance of the communications industry to the national economy and the need to protect export markets in order to maintain technical supremacy in the field of information and communication. The Government of the United States rejected any link between the new information order and the new international economic order, including any restructuring of the international economic system. Through its policy based on the unrestricted flow of information the Government of the United States had unsuccessfully attempted to subjugate developing countries in the field of telecommunications. Unable to buy them off or undermine the movement of Non-Aligned Countries, that Government had crudely stepped up its campaign of blackmail against the United Nations system. Its reckless policy of intervention and aggression against countries or movements which wished to remain autonomous had led to genocide in Lebanon, the unfortunate situation in the Malvinas Islands, the senseless acts of provocation against Nicaragua, the constant campaign of harassment against Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia and the plan to exterminate the struggling people of El Salvador.

58. The technological changes in the field of information and communication had caused structural unemployment, for which the advanced capitalist system had no remedy. The political, social and class struggle, therefore, would inevitably reach an unprecedented scale. The Government of the United States would be unable to suppress that struggle through its policy of terror and intimidation.

59. Officials of the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and France had also expressed deep concern at the impossibility of controlling the activities of the large international information and telecommunications systems and had stressed the need to ensure respect for the diversity of peoples and cultures. According to an article in the International Herald Tribune published on 22 June 1980, the

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United States controlled 90 per cent of the information and telecommunication sector of the world economy. Concern had been expressed at information neo-imperialism brought about by the free dissemination of data which enabled transnational corporations to perpetrate fraud, conduct espionage and engage in unfair competition. The rapid development of international telecommunication networks threatened the cultural identity of countries, jeopardized national autonomy and supported foreign domination by the imposition of foreign values. The role of the United States in that regard was particularly infamous.

60. Mr. NOVAK (Poland), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his delegation firmly rejected the statement made by the representative of the United States with regard to Poland. He expressed surprise and deep regret at the almost insulting and hysterical remarks directed at his country. He had the impression that the representative of the United States had not listened to the statement made by the Polish delegation the previous day. That statement had not constituted an attack on the free flow of information but, on the contrary, had expressed support for that concept as formulated in the Helsinki Final Act. Furthermore, that statement had also expressed concern at the fact that Poland had been the object of an aggressive propaganda campaign. The measures taken against foreign radio broadcasts, particularly those of "Radio Free Europe" were designed to settle the Polish affair by peaceful means in accordance with the national consensus and counteract certain efforts to create an explosive situation in Poland.

61. Mr. KAZAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of the United States had undertaken the impossible task of trying to prove that the growing concentration of information and communication technology in the hands of the transnational monopolies was the surest guarantee of freedom of speech in response to the aspirations of all mankind. The debate in the Committee, however, had shown that that view was held by the minority. Furthermore, the concept of the free flow of information was used by certain countries to dominate and misinform millions of people who had no way of protecting themselves from it. His delegation rejected that concept of the free flow of information.

62. The ungentlemanly attacks made against the representative of the People's Republic of Poland had not surprised his delegation, in view of the crusade proclaimed by the current Government of the United States against that country. Various reasons, including the alleged concern of the United States over the fact that Polish workers had been deprived of the right to declare a general strike, had been put forward in an attempt to justify interference in the internal affairs of Poland and a subversive propaganda campaign against that country. Before it assumed the moral right to delve into the rights and practices of trade unions in other countries, the Government of the United States should grant its own trade unions the right to declare a general strike. It should not be forgotten how a bill was "steamrollered" through the Congress of the United States prohibiting the nation-wide strike threatened by the railroad workers union. That was proof of the groundlessness of claims put forward by certain countries attempting to defend their right to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign socialist country.

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In that regard, he recalled that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Warsaw Treaty had stated that all necessary measures would be taken to preserve order in the interest of the workers of Poland, and the socialist system in that country. With respect to the claim that the Soviet Union had used electronic jamming devices against certain broadcasts directed not only against Poland but also against other socialist countries, he reiterated the position of his Government that the Soviet Union, as a sovereign country, had the right to take the necessary steps to defend itself against subversive propaganda.

63. Mr. LICHENSTEIN (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had been astonished that the representative of Cuba had used the word "intervention" particularly when the Government of that country was so expert in intervention throughout the Western hemisphere and the African continent. In order to clear up the misconceptions of the representative of Cuba with regard to the American capitalist system, he would send him a copy of the Fortune 500 List and a copy of the charter of INTELSAT, which was a consortium of sovereign Governments and private corporations. The United States made no apologies for its leadership in the field of communication technology. Those services were available to all countries, even, it was hoped, one day to a free Cuba.

64. It was regrettable that the representative of Poland had found his remarks insulting. He had only intended to describe the repressive régime which that delegation represented. He would be delighted to share with the representative of Poland the texts of the factual news reports which the United States had attempted to broadcast to Poland and which had been deliberately withheld from the Polish people. With regard to the statement made by the representative of the Soviet Union and the question which system better inculcated, encouraged and indeed permitted free speech, he would let the record and history speak as his witness.

65. Mr. GONZALEZ-MANET (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the reaction of the representative of the United States was logical. For the past 23 years Cuba had been totally free from the imperialist domination of the United States. In spite of the hostility of the world's economically, and perhaps militarily, most powerful country, Cuba had shown that it was possible for an undeveloped country to develop through the direct participation of its people in that process. He drew the attention of the representative of the United States to a book entitled Who Knows: Information in the Age of the Fortune 500, written by Herbert I. Schiller, an eminent professor at the University of California. That book provided a complete and up-to-date analysis of how the United States used information and communications to further its policy of imperialist domination. Furthermore, the Senior Advisor for Science and Technology in the State Department, Mr. William C. Salmon, had stressed, in February 1982, the vital importance of information and communication technology for the overall technological strength and supremacy of the United States and had stated that various aspects and uses of that technology were being rejected by other countries, both friendly and unfriendly. Various Governments had begun to react to the challenges posed to traditional concepts of State sovereignty and had expressed concern at the fact that large

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quantities of data in foreign hands could endanger their security and harm their economic interests. Mr. Salmon had pointed out that the position of the United States with regard to the international information and communication policies were not shared by all and that significant differences of opinion had arisen among its closest commercial and industrial partners.

66. It was obvious that even the allies of the United States in Western Europe were fearful of the effects of the information policy of the United States on their own cultures. The United States would not win its struggle against the tide of history. For 23 years Cuba had endeavoured to win that struggle both for itself and for the other developing countries in the world, not through intervention but through sacrifice, austerity and international solidarity, in spite of the policy of aggression, pressure and blackmail of the Government of the United States. Cuba would continue its struggle for the liberation of all peoples.

REQUESTS FOR HEARING

67. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the members of the Committee to documents A/SPC/37/L.4/Add.8 to 14, which contained requests for hearings relating to agenda item 33, entitled "Policies of apartheid of the Government of South Africa". In accordance with the decision taken at its 11th meeting, the Committee would consider all requests for hearings on Monday, 1 November.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.