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## Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

### Summary record of the 18th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 19 November 2001, at 3 p.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Hasmy. . . . . (Malaysia)

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.*

**Agenda item 90: Questions relating to information**  
(A/56/21 and Add.1, A/56/411; A/C.4/56/L.19)

1. **Mr. Tharoor** (Interim Head of the Department of Public Information) said that the Department had risen to the challenge of informing an anxious world about the response of the United Nations to the menace of terrorism. On 11 September 2001, a core group of staff had remained on duty to record and disseminate worldwide the first statements of the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council condemning the attacks. Subsequently, senior United Nations officials had appeared on major broadcasts around the world; the Department had posted on the web the provisions of the 12 United Nations conventions on terrorism; the Secretary-General, whose editorial article had appeared in *The New York Times*, had participated via satellite in "town hall" meetings organized in 10 United States cities; special pages on United Nations action against terrorism had been created on the web site; and guidance had been given to United Nations information centres, agencies and departments on how to address the complex issues involved.

2. The Department's ongoing activities had also been updated. The guided tour operation, suspended for a month, had resumed, albeit with fewer visitors per guide for security reasons and because of the general drop in tourism. The Department was actively participating in the Integrated Mission Task Force, which was working on contingency plans for the return of the United Nations to Afghanistan, ensuring priority consideration for the role of public information activities that would include a long-term and short-term information strategy for Afghanistan. The Department had shown clearly that it had the agility to respond rapidly to a situation of crisis.

3. At the opening of the General Debate at the current session, the Secretary-General, for whom communications held high priority in his vision for a revitalized United Nations, had emphasized that, despite the focus on terrorism, it remained no less pressing to further the agenda for peace, development and human rights set out in the Millennium Declaration. The Department of Public Information accordingly intended to communicate all the ways in which the United Nations was working to solve the

problems of the twenty-first century. It had publicized United Nations plans for economic and social advancement, especially in the world's poorest countries, developed promotional campaigns for the special session on HIV/AIDS and for the United Nations conferences dealing with small arms and racism, and was working on promotional campaigns for the coming conferences dealing with sustainable development, financing for development and ageing.

4. The media being the single most important vehicle through which global opinion about the United Nations was formed, it was clearly essential for the Department to increase its links to the international news media and improve the quality of the information it provided to them, in the interests of both information outreach and a more transparent Organization. The United Nations unquestionably had "stories" to tell, and the demand for them was rising. The United Nations News Centre, for example, had become an acknowledged gateway for the entire United Nations system. A completely redesigned web site had just been launched, with significantly improved search capabilities, and soon there would be an extensive directory of the email addresses of the international media, allowing the Department to forward stories of interest, especially to small developing countries which might not have access to commercial news services.

5. The media encounters organized by the Department had provided a forum where media representatives and international experts could exchange views. In addition, the Department's annual training programmes for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists and for those from developing countries, which had been so successful for the past 21 years, had helped to establish a growing network of media professionals who were able to raise awareness of the United Nations. The communications workshops for senior officials from other United Nations departments were also continuing.

6. The Committee had before it a draft resolution submitted by the Committee on Information which would, among other things, give the Department a clear mandate to proceed with live radio broadcasting in the six official languages in the coming biennium. Member States must now decide whether the pilot project — which had allowed the Organization to take its message directly to millions of listeners around the world on some 265 radio stations, which in some cases were the principal source of international news — was to be

converted into a permanent international radio-broadcasting capacity. Under the capital master plan for Headquarters, the Department was upgrading its broadcasting facilities by moving its radio, television and photo production facilities from analog to digital technology, a large and complex undertaking.

7. While the traditional means of dissemination, including print, radio and television, remained indispensable, the Department was at the same time integrating the latest communications technologies, especially in order to provide developing countries with immediate access to news from the United Nations. The United Nations web site, for instance, had during the past year seen dramatic improvement both in the breadth of its contents and the level of usage, now averaging 6 million accesses a day from 170 countries and territories. The 1 billion accesses in 2001 had surpassed the total number for all previous years combined. A major achievement during the year had been the development of an in-house capability for providing live webcasts.

8. The greatest challenge was to make information available on the web site in all six official languages, as requested by the General Assembly. Despite a creative redirection of resources within the Department, the gap between English and to some extent French and the other languages was unfortunately growing. It was a certainty that additional resources would be required but with a zero-growth budget, the Department was not in a position to request them.

9. The Department was continuing to create new offerings on its web site. Video exhibits relating to the work of the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council had been upgraded; and in the area of cartography, a United Nations geographic database was being developed for use by all parts of the United Nations system.

10. The Department was working in partnership with the United Nations system, Governments and the private sector to bring the United Nations to the public directly in new and more effective ways. It was also building partnerships with non-governmental organizations and educational institutions, often through special events and exhibits at Headquarters, thus raising the United Nations profile in civil society. The network of United Nations information centres and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

offices continued to play a major role in promoting the Organization's agenda among local audiences around the world and had proved particularly effective in highlighting United Nations conferences and General Assembly special sessions. In line with the request of the General Assembly, the overall allocation of resources to the information centres would be carefully reviewed in order to enhance their effectiveness and their reach in the developing world.

11. Working with the dedicated and talented staff of the Department, which had to cope with the proliferating United Nations mandates and priorities, he himself had begun a quiet process of reform within the Department to help it develop a more consistent United Nations message in a world besieged by information. He hoped, in part, to open the lines of communication within the United Nations so that ideas could circulate freely. The response within the Department itself had been gratifying. As Chairman of the Secretary-General's Communications Group, a mechanism for the coordination of communications issues by New York-based information officials, he had seen the Group evolve into a counterpart of the system-wide Joint United Nations Information Committee, thus making strategic planning more coherent.

12. The Department of Public Information served as the voice of the United Nations by helping all Secretariat departments formulate and effectively communicate their messages. At the request of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, it had taken the lead in consulting with all the departments that had listed public information activities in their budgetary requirements in order to identify the nature of their information needs and see if there was room for further rationalization; and would soon issue a report on the matter. A preliminary finding was that many of those activities involved the production of technical information for a limited audience of specialists. Future programme budget proposals should make public information priorities part of the strategic planning throughout the Secretariat. At the same time, a coherent, effective and unified image of the United Nations had to be projected and duplication of effort minimized. For the peoples of the world to feel that it was working to fulfil their needs, the United Nations would need an authoritative voice and a strong, efficient Department of Public Information.

13. **Mr. Haggag** (Rapporteur of the Committee on Information), introducing that Committee's report on its twenty-third session (A/56/21 and Add.1), which had been held from 30 April to 11 May 2001 and from 5 to 7 September 2001, drew attention to the two draft resolutions in the report: draft resolution A, entitled "Information in the service of humanity", and draft resolution B, entitled "United Nations public information policies and activities". The latter had been significantly enriched, reflecting the importance of the various issues on the agenda of the Committee on Information. At its resumed session in September, the Committee on Information had discussed the pilot project on the development of an international radio-broadcasting capacity for the United Nations, and had decided to add paragraphs on that issue in the text of draft resolution B.

14. It was hoped that both draft resolutions would be adopted by consensus, as was the usual practice, in the expectation that the implementation of the decisions and recommendations therein would allow the Department of Public Information to respond to the increasing demands made upon it by Member States and would enable the Organization to make its voice heard by the citizens of the world, who were, in the final analysis, its constituents.

15. **Mr. Alcalay** (Chairman of the Committee on Information), praised the Secretary-General's rapid reaction to the tragic events of 11 September 2001 and the unanimous and immediate condemnation of the terrorist attacks by the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Department of Public Information had also reacted swiftly to publicize the international community's solidarity against international terrorism and its decision to give the United Nations the leading role in that connection.

16. The constructive approach of all those involved in the work of the Committee on Information had enabled that Committee to fulfil its role of guiding the Organization's information policy and activities. In order to improve the quality of its work even further, it had proposed, in draft resolution B, that the Department of Public Information should arrange, in consultation with the Chairman, informal meetings with the members of the Committee every three months to discuss the ongoing work of the Department. That was a practical way to enhance cooperation between the management of the Department and the Committee.

17. The Committee on Information was convinced that the United Nations needed to familiarize people throughout the world with its objectives and activities in order to enjoy broad-based global support. That was particularly true in the light of the Millennium Declaration, which had enshrined the concept of the United Nations as the indispensable common house of the entire human family. The Committee therefore fully supported the work of the Department of Public Information and its efforts to make full use of new information technologies. The Department's renewed vigour, demonstrated in the recent information campaigns accompanying the Third International Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the General Assembly special session on HIV/AIDS had brought those issues unprecedented media coverage. He welcomed the fact that the Department was now focused on publicizing the important conferences scheduled for 2002, in particular the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

18. As the twenty-first century began, the United Nations had received clear instructions from leaders around the world in the form of the Millennium Declaration. Its Secretary-General for the coming five years was a universally admired person whose task was to guide the Organization in carrying out those instructions effectively. The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations and the Secretary-General was a recognition of their work for peace and justice in the world. The United Nations deserved a strong Department of Public Information supported by everyone; the Committee on Information, for its part, had the technical and human potential to do the work required of it.

19. **Mr. Asadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that although the information and communication technology revolution opened vast new opportunities for developing countries in the fields of economic growth and social development, it also posed many challenges and risks which could lead to a further widening of the gap between the developing and the developed countries; most of the world's population continued to live in poverty, and the emerging new information and knowledge-based economy remained concentrated in the developed countries. Closing that gap would require genuine cooperation and assistance on the part of the developed countries but would also

require more cooperation among the developing countries themselves. In that context, he recalled the provisions of the Tehran Consensus adopted at the tenth meeting of the Intergovernmental Follow-up and Coordination Committee on Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries in August 2001, which had recognized the need to bridge the knowledge and information gap as one of the five strategic objectives of long-term South-South cooperation. The United Nations should play a key role by promoting and accelerating universal access to information and communication technologies and by contributing to the development of norms and standards on a transparent, meaningful and participatory basis. Accordingly, he welcomed the launching of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force.

20. United Nations public information policies and activities must reflect the need for a new, more just and effective global information and communication order, based on a free and balanced flow of information to all peoples. The Department of Public Information must therefore provide accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the peoples of all regions about the work of the Organization in order to strengthen international support for it, bearing in mind local language requirements, and identifying audiences and geographical areas which were not covered adequately. It was important that all six official languages of the Organization should receive equal treatment and that the staff should have appropriate language qualifications. He applauded the efforts to increase awareness of the results of the World Summit on Social Development and the International Conference on Financing for Development as examples to be emulated by the Organization and by Governments.

21. The United Nations information centres should promote public awareness and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, in particular in the areas of economic and social development and United Nations peacekeeping operations; further efforts were needed to ensure the equitable distribution of resources among those centres. He welcomed the development by the centres of web pages in local languages, encouraged the Department of Public Information to provide the centres with the necessary resources and technical facilities and stressed that even in the event of the

integration of the information centres with UNDP field offices, their operational and functional independence should be maintained.

22. He commended the Department of Public Information for the important role it had played in implementing promotional campaigns and encouraged it to continue those efforts in cooperation with Member States and the United Nations system. He also expressed satisfaction with the efforts of the Committee on Information with regard to traditional means of communication, in particular radio, which was still the most widely used medium across the world, especially in the developing countries.

23. **Mr. Djacta** (Algeria), associating his delegation with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the work of the Committee was taking place in unique circumstances following the terrorist attacks of 11 September. The unanimous condemnation of and response to the attacks showed that Member States were acutely aware of the enormous threat posed to humanity by international terrorism. In that context, the information sector had a major role to play in terms of raising public awareness at both national and international levels, organizing the struggle against the manifestations and roots of terrorism and ensuring that terrorists did not use advances in information and communication technologies for their own macabre ends.

24. Recent events should not jeopardize the many benefits that could be derived from responsible use of new information technologies. Globalization, whether it related to information or other aspects of economic and social development, should provide an incentive to increase cooperation and should lead to greater unity rather than marginalization and division. In order to achieve globalization of information, developing countries needed to be afforded broader access to technology and the possibility of contributing to technological development. The Millennium Declaration had confirmed the central role of the United Nations in promoting development and international cooperation and stressed the need to manage globalization in such a way that new technologies were available to all and developing countries could take their place in the new global economy.

25. One year since the launching of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, he recalled that the first Decade had failed to achieve its objectives because of a number of difficulties and the lack of real cooperation by administering or occupying Powers with the Committee of 24. He reiterated the call issued at the twenty-third session of the Committee on Information for the Committee to redouble its efforts to raise awareness of the work of the United Nations relating to decolonization. A sustained campaign through the various available media would help to end colonial domination and enable the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination.

26. The Secretary-General's report on questions relating to information (A/56/411) highlighted important progress in the development of means of disseminating United Nations news worldwide. He welcomed the high standard of the Organization's web site and the large number of visitors it received from many countries. Its News Service had proved a particularly effective means of disseminating information. His delegation reiterated its appeal for the six official languages of the United Nations to receive equal representation on the web site. While some progress had been made in ensuring that publications from the Department of Public Information and content on the web site were truly multilingual, it was important to continue efforts in that direction. He also hoped that the Dag Hammarskjöld Library could be provided with more material in the Arabic language.

27. The United Nations had a major role to play in promoting the principles of press freedom and ethics and in helping the countries of the South catch up with those of the North in terms of communications. His delegation welcomed the high-level briefing programmes organized by the Department of Public Information for journalists from different regions of the world and hoped that particular attention would be paid to journalists from Africa, since that continent had much ground to make up with regard to information in general and journalism in particular.

28. He welcomed the decision made by the Committee on Information which had led to an increase in the international radio-broadcasting capacity of the United Nations in the six official languages. The radio broadcasts enabled tens of millions of listeners, even in the remotest corners of the world, to learn about the

Organization's efforts to improve people's lives and restore peace and security in many regions of the world. It was a particularly important means of communication in the light of the digital divide between the countries of the North and the South.

29. The continued development of the United Nations information centres was helping to make information available to the greatest possible number of researchers and users in many countries; his delegation reiterated its support for the centres and expressed the hope that they would be provided with adequate human and material resources. In developing countries, the centres represented a precious window on the world and afforded instant access to United Nations news and documentation; it was therefore especially important to provide them with the latest communications technology so that they could fulfil their role as effectively as those centres located in developed countries.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.30 p.m. and resumed at 4.50 p.m.*

30. **Mr. Otaiba** (United Arab Emirates) said that the astonishing developments in technology and communications over the past decade had promoted a positive change in the nature of international relations. Conversely, however, they had also helped to widen the economic and social gaps between the countries of the North and those of the South, marginalizing developing communities and exacerbating the difficulties which they faced. It was therefore more essential than ever to develop and utilize the sophisticated technological and information tools now available in order to mobilize institutions and the public with a view to furthering the objectives of programmes and plans designed to address those social, economic and political challenges. He emphasized the need for a comprehensive and effective strategy of international cooperation to increase financial and technical aid to developing countries in order to reform and develop their national structures and human resources in the field of information technology, as well as ensure the free flow of information and the implementation of public awareness-raising programmes.

31. His delegation was gravely concerned by the calculated disregard shown by the Western media in connection with matters which preoccupied countries of the third world, and the frequent attempts to control and distort information concerning the history, culture

and beliefs of the Arab and Islamic world in order to kindle hatred and discrimination against it, particularly in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. The Western States and their media institutions had a responsibility to re-examine the bias in their policies towards the peoples of the developing world. In that connection, it was essential to establish a balanced world information and communication strategy that focused on credibility and transparency in the dissemination of information, on the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on the other legal, moral and humanitarian criteria stipulated in bilateral, regional and international agreements on information and culture, in particular mutual respect for religious beliefs and for the values, heritage and cultural diversity of peoples.

32. The use of information was ever more vital as a means of furthering the efforts of the United Nations to discharge its responsibilities in the face of current global challenges. The Department of Public Information therefore played a valuable role in spreading the message of the United Nations to the public worldwide; in that connection he welcomed the development of the Department's broadcasting, telecommunications and Internet facilities and also called for further development of the skills and capacities of its staff. Concerned, however, by the relative lack of attention which the Department devoted to the Arabic language as an official language, he strongly urged its use in all United Nations activities without exception and on an equal footing with the other official languages, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

33. In conclusion, his delegation underlined the need to strengthen the ties of cooperation between the Department of Public Information and other United Nations agencies in order to raise awareness of the pressing issues on their agendas. He also called on the Department to strengthen its activities to provide information on the Palestinian question and the situation in the Middle East, particularly in connection with the daily suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of the Israeli policies pursued in the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, including Jerusalem, in violation of human rights principles, the provisions of international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

34. **Mr. Shebani** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, despite the relentless advances in information

technology which had narrowed distances and eliminated national boundaries, there remained a persistent need to balance information at the international level, particularly in view of the selectivity and factual distortion practised by the Western media in their coverage of the developing world. His delegation called on the United Nations to play a greater role in bridging the information technology divide between the North and the South. The United Nations and State media should take care to avoid stirring up ethnic conflicts; instead, they should help to resolve problems in connection with, inter alia, sustainable development, poverty eradication and the rights of women and children, and raise awareness of serious issues such as AIDS, racial discrimination and old age.

35. Bearing in mind the freedom of opinion and expression enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the freedom of the press as a pillar of democracy, his delegation hoped that a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order would be created in the interests of a free and balanced global flow of objective and transparent information that would further the establishment of international peace and security, generate respect for cultural and religious diversity and promote interaction between civilizations and peoples.

36. His delegation supported the efforts of the Department of Public Information to publicize United Nations activities and the aims of various peacekeeping operations and hoped that the capacity of the training programmes would be increased to accommodate as many trainees as possible. He welcomed the work of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the field of information and publications, as well as its efforts to develop the capabilities of the developing countries in that connection.

37. **Mr. Haggag** (Egypt) said that the distressing events and ensuing repercussions of 11 September 2001 had highlighted the vital role which the United Nations could play in raising awareness of different cultures and promoting constructive dialogue in order to change the mindsets which hindered mutual understanding and closer relations among the peoples of the world. The Department of Public Information had largely succeeded in its use of the developments in information technology to convey the message of the United Nations worldwide and raise global awareness

of its activities. The United Nations, however, should make pioneering efforts to harness those developments for the benefit of all States as part of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order that would bridge the huge digital divide between the developed and the developing countries. To that end, the Department should be provided with the financial and human resources needed to enable it to strengthen its role in line with the increasing responsibilities placed on it with each passing year.

38. Egypt attached great importance to the efforts to develop an international broadcasting capacity for the United Nations and had continually expressed its readiness to cooperate in implementing the plans formulated in that connection. His delegation therefore greatly appreciated the efforts made to ensure the success of the pilot project and looked forward to its conversion into a permanent broadcasting capacity, which would require allocation of the necessary resources.

39. His delegation also appreciated the response of the Secretariat to the General Assembly resolutions adopted in connection with the integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of UNDP and its efforts to carry out the wishes of host Governments, and hoped those efforts would continue. It looked forward to the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution that would lead to full parity among the official languages of the United Nations on its web site. Any proposals for the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of that site should not be guided by the extent to which each language was actually used on the site; such an approach would not only hinder achievement of the desired parity but also widen the existing gap between the six official languages. His delegation therefore stressed the importance of paragraph 55 of draft resolution A of the Committee on Information, which sought to ensure the equitable distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Information allocated to the web site among all official languages on a continuous basis.

40. Egypt had always underlined the need for the Department of Public Information to carry out in full the activities in connection with the special information programme on the question of Palestine until a just and permanent solution was reached. His delegation consequently reiterated its appreciation for the annual

training programme for Palestinian journalists run by the Department and looked forward to continuing and increased efforts in that connection. Lastly, he affirmed Egypt's commitment to the principles enshrined in draft resolution A and looked forward to further cooperation among all States and the United Nations with a view to placing information in the service of humanity by uniting peoples and narrowing the divide between them.

41. **Mr. Streeter** (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that despite the dizzying developments in the field of information and communication technologies, there was a growing technological divide between developed and developing countries and between rich and poor countries which prevented a fair sharing of the benefits of the process of globalization. Reducing that yawning chasm would require effective cooperation mechanisms in various sectors in order to achieve a better balance and greater social justice in the world and prevent the poor countries from being left behind. Although the effort required went far beyond the mandate of the Committee, the constructive dialogue which characterized its work should contribute to achieving the necessary levels of balance which would enable countries to adapt effectively to the new reality.

42. Faced with the growing demand for a more effective and efficient dissemination of public information on the work of the United Nations, which would contribute to the development of many priority areas throughout the world, the Department of Public Information had taken up constructive proposals made by certain Member States. Other States had stressed the need to improve the efficiency of the information centres around the world and to achieve parity in the use of all the official languages in public information matters, including United Nations web sites. At the twenty-third session of the Committee on Information, the Rio Group countries had reaffirmed their commitment to the establishment of a new world information and communication order and to the Committee's other objectives, including the crucial issue of multilingualism, in particular the need for human and financial resources to enrich the information provided in Spanish, commensurate with the number of Spanish speakers. In that connection, he noted with appreciation the efforts made by the Department of Public Information to introduce innovations and integrate new technologies and to give



all the official languages equal prominence on the web sites. Those efforts should be highlighted and recognized as strategic, given the growing importance of the Internet for the dissemination of information by the Organization.

43. It should be borne in mind, however, that a great many of the recipients of information in the developing countries were not appropriately equipped to process that information with the desirable level of effectiveness and efficiency and that much of the material was prepared predominately in one of the official languages. The Department of Public Information, in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Committee on Information, should therefore continue its efforts to ensure parity in terms of language and content; the Rio Group would work actively to ensure that the Department was given the necessary mandate to achieve those objectives. For developing countries, it was crucial for the Organization to utilize and adequately maintain the traditional means of dissemination of information; he welcomed the Department's efforts to update and improve the United Nations radio and television capacity with a view to reaching a greater number of users as well as other communications media around the world in order to familiarize them with the activities and achievements of the Organization. Another important strategic activity was the computerization of the Dag Hammarskjöld Library in order to make its resources available to the international academic community and to Member States; that work should continue and be expanded.

44. Given the importance of information issues and their impact on the development of interpersonal and international relations at the global level, the Rio Group stood ready to promote activities which could encourage fruitful dialogue and close cooperation between domestic actors and the international community as a whole, including the private sector.

45. **Mr. Galán** (Spain) said that his Government strongly condemned the use of violence to silence journalists or hinder their work and expressed deep regret for all journalists who had lost their lives anywhere in of the world, in particular those who had recently been killed in Afghanistan.

46. The Department of Public Information played an important role in keeping the peoples of the world informed about the objectives and activities of the

United Nations. Open and ready access to ideas and information was essential to enable the citizens of the world to take part in global society and public access to United Nations information was essential for the development of the international community. Technological advances had created new challenges for the Department of Public Information but should be seen as a complement to traditional methods and an opportunity to improve efficiency, reduce costs and promote the dissemination of the Department's traditional products. In order to deliver the United Nations global message to local audiences around the world, all available communication and information media must be used and key disseminators of information, in particular the media and non-governmental organizations, must be involved. That message must be delivered in a local voice that the average world citizen could easily understand.

47. The United Nations system was essentially an information producing, distributing and consuming organism and a sound information policy was therefore vital to good management and to the role of the Organization in the world. New technologies permitted increased intercommunication between United Nations departments and their respective audiences and constituencies and it was therefore essential to develop a culture of communication throughout the Organization, making communication and information policies an integral part of its strategic management. The Department of Public Information and other United Nations departments must keep international audiences informed of the goals and achievements of the Organization; to that end, the Organization should also promote multilingualism and all staff should speak at least two of the official languages.

48. Although information and communication technologies were rapidly changing the world, not all people were benefiting to the same extent and the developing and developed countries must work together to try to bridge the gap in the use and development of such technologies so that the poor countries would not be left behind. Although the Internet was not a substitute for poverty eradication programmes it could help enhance them.

49. Reform of United Nations public information policies must continue not only to reduce costs and improve efficiency but above all to enhance their effectiveness. The Department of Public Information's objective should be to continue to disseminate timely,

multilingual, comprehensive, balanced and reliable information through print, audio-visual and Internet media to a worldwide audience. Clear indicators should be developed to ensure follow-up and evaluation of success in meeting those objectives. The growing sensitivity of the Department and the United Nations as a whole to the importance of multilingualism, as evidenced for example in the web pages relating to the Organization's role in the fight against terrorism, was a positive step. His delegation looked forward to the announced link between the Official Document System and the United Nations web site, which would greatly enhance the multilingual character of the web site and its value as an essential tool for all the public interested in obtaining free information on the work of the United Nations.

#### **Election of officers**

50. **The Chairman** recalled his suggestion that the Committee should adopt a system of rotation for the posts of Chairperson, Vice-Chairpersons and Rapporteur based on the English alphabetical order of the regional groups. He took it that the Committee wished to adopt that system of rotation for its current and future sessions.

51. *It was so decided.*

52. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should elect the remaining members of the Bureau in the light of the newly adopted system of rotation.

53. *Ms. Rusu (Romania), Mr. Streeter (Chile), and Ms. Korpi (Finland), were elected Vice-Chairpersons by acclamation, and Mr. Maitland (South Africa) was elected Rapporteur by acclamation.*

*The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.*