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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 79: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/43/21, 639, 670)

1. Mr. SIBIE (Saudi Arabia) recalled article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which dealt with individual freedom of opinion and expression, and article 29, which defined the acceptable limitations on individual rights in the interests of society. From an Islamic perspective and under Islamic law, the freedom of the individual could not be isolated from the freedom of society. A distinction must be drawn between clean information and polluted information, and the standards regulating the privileges of those who disseminated information must be delicately balanced. Societies must be able to defend their values and their legislation against those in the society who would abuse or undermine them. He therefore suggested that the articles referred to did not sufficiently underline the right of all States to protect the community from the risks of irresponsible information.
2. Paying tribute to the Under-Secretary-General's efforts to revitalize DPI, his delegation hoped that the Department would continue to operate at all times in keeping with Charter principles. It urged reconsideration, however, of the merging of the two DPI units that dealt with apartheid and the Palestinian question respectively, in order to avoid their marginalization.
3. Since the times of the Prophet, Islam had found information to be an essential, beneficent instrument. Islam had spread to all corners of the globe not through aggression but through the force of ideas which had captured the minds of those to whom they had been communicated. Thanks to such propagation of Islamic tenets, women had recovered their rights and dignity, confidence among people had grown, and equality and peace been promoted.
4. There was no alternative to responsible information. Information should never be used as a means of insult, and it could not ignore the rights of peoples to self-determination. The uprising in the occupied Arab territories was an expression of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, yet the reporting on the uprising by the mass media had abruptly been squelched at the behest of the Zionist Knesset. Once genuine information was suppressed, only the voices serving the interests and whims of those in control would be heard.
5. Mr. ALEMU (Ethiopia) observed that the noticeable improvement in the international political situation had been reflected in the remarkable lessening of rhetorical inflation apparent in the General Assembly's current deliberations. There was a growing understanding that national interests could be served only within the framework of multilateralism and the pursuit of common goals. Mutual trust, however, could hardly be forged when the overwhelming majority found themselves unable to convey their views and feelings. The existing imbalance in the flow of information perpetuated misperceptions on the part of the developed countries about much of what went on in the developing world, and suspicion on the part of the developing countries.

(Mr. Alemu, Ethiopia)

6. The need for a new world information and communication order was an imperative dictated not by ideological considerations but by pragmatism, and its rationale was the need for a healthy and real dialogue. His delegation, unlike some, felt that the establishment of such a new order would not militate against freedom of information but would to the contrary enrich it and allow for a greater flow of information.

7. The challenges in the field of information could be met only if those in a position to do so helped the developing countries to improve their infrastructure, gain access to new communication technologies and train their nationals to use them. The role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was capital in that regard. His own country had benefited from UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), although, with the limited resources available to the Programme, it was impossible for it to make the needed impact in redressing the imbalance in the field of information. Simple pragmatism dictated that those responsible for 90 per cent of the production of information should do more to help make IPDC more viable.

8. The restructuring of the Department of Public Information (DPI) was an enormous undertaking, but Ethiopia was confident that it would be done in accordance with the priorities and mandates set by the General Assembly. DPI should thus continue to provide information on apartheid and on the questions of Namibia and Palestine. The restructuring should also take into account the human dimension, the morale of the staff involved. His delegation welcomed the Under-Secretary-General's commitment to expanding the annual training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries, particularly to include some from less established news agencies such as those in the front-line States.

9. Ethiopia regretted that the Committee on Information had been unable to reach consensus on a resolution based on the very reasonable draft recommendations proposed by the Group of 77, as contained in annex III of the Committee's report (A/43/21).

10. Mr. SUHAIL (Pakistan) observed that information, which had obvious potential for creating global harmony, had sadly been reduced to a mere tool for the achievement of the developed countries' economic and ideological objectives. There was an unbalanced one-way flow of information towards the developing countries, and the powerful media in the developed world, financed by the large corporations, had increasingly monopolized news gathering and dissemination. Transnational corporate control over the new communications technologies had aggravated the imbalance; and the technological changes themselves, which affected the nature and volume of the flow of information as well as the interpretation of news, were working to the disadvantage of the developing countries. More than 80 per cent of the world's people faced the threat of being totally deprived of technological infrastructures, resources and professional know-how.

11. Pakistan was against the unjust arrangement that reduced the majority to dependence and excluded them from partaking in the global efforts to create a better world. It urged instead a judicious and logical system, a new world

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(Mr. Suhail, Pakistan)

information and communication order in which communication skills and technology were shared by the developed countries on a non-discriminatory basis, and without the imposition of restrictions incompatible with freedom of information and the free flow of information. At the same time, the developing countries must strengthen their own infrastructures and establish coherent policies in the field of communication, education and culture. Such a dual approach would, over time, reduce the existing imbalance and open a new chapter of mutual co-operation.

12. It was important to project United Nations activities to Member States as faithfully and adequately as possible, thereby creating an informed public opinion. The radio programmes produced by DPI were very important in that respect, but it appeared that the Department had not been able to devise a balanced radio-broadcasting policy. Pakistan hoped, for instance, that DPI would resume regular broadcasts in Urdu, an important international language spoken in many countries of South Asia and the Middle East and by more than 100 million people in Pakistan alone. His delegation also supported the work of the United Nations Correspondents Association, a representative press body that had been a lively source of news about the United Nations. DPI should extend all facilities to it despite the current financial crisis. Pakistan also attached special importance to IPDC, which UNESCO must expand to fit the requirements of individual States.

13. It also hoped that DPI would adequately cover in its programmes all the major international issues. It urged continuation of the training programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries. It was a matter of great concern, however, that the developing countries were not adequately represented in the DPI staff: the principle of equitable geographical representation must be observed in all recruitment, especially at the senior level. It was heartening to see from the Under-Secretary-General's report on the activities of DPI that the Department was assuming a vigorous, dynamic role at a propitious time.

14. Mr. ABOU-HADID (Syrian Arab Republic) stressed that the objective of a new world information and communication order was to put an end to the unjust situation in the field of information and eliminate the distortion of images and information under the current system, which was based on the hegemony of a small number of Western news agencies as the sole source of information. The new order was meant not to restrict the dissemination of information but rather to establish a dialogue based on justice and equality with respect for all values. The establishment of such an order was a continuing process and required enormous efforts by all. His delegation underscored the urgency of overcoming the technological gap in the field of information between North and South by providing the developing countries with the necessary technological infrastructures. Those countries sought to establish a new information order that ensured the dissemination of objective information on their social, cultural and economic problems in order to find adequate solutions to them.

15. The draft recommendations contained in annex III of the report of the Committee on Information (A/43/21) reflected the basic principles for co-operation to establish a new order and strengthen peace and security in the world. It was

(Mr. Abou-Hadid, Syrian Arab Republic)

hoped that positive results would be achieved in establishing a dialogue on the new information order to which all countries aspired, particularly the developing countries.

16. Referring to the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/43/670), he stressed that co-operation based on good political will would continue to help the international community achieve its objectives. Through UNESCO the United Nations should promote the transfer of equipment and technology and provide various types of assistance to the developing countries. He commended the work done thus far by UNESCO and attached great importance to its role in promoting the establishment of the new information order.

17. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the work carried out by the Department of Public Information. In spite of the financial crisis affecting the Organization and the Department's limited budget, DPI had successfully implemented its programmes by defining priorities and policies geared to the developing world. The Department assisted the activities of the developing countries and covered such subjects as threats to international peace and security, economic recovery, the apartheid régime and violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories. The Department should continue to foster the support of international public opinion for United Nations activities in the field of development, disarmament, international law and its efforts to eliminate racial discrimination and solve other grave problems. The Department's regional radio and television broadcasting units should be strengthened, and greater support should be given to DPI publications on decolonization, the question of Palestine and Namibia. His delegation supported the sending of missions of journalists to the Middle East so that representatives of the mass media could witness what was being done to the Palestinian people and denounce Israeli practices. He favoured closer co-operation between the Department and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries. The Department should also increase its co-operation with the various national agencies in the field of information and participate in all their meetings in order to cover their activities more comprehensively.

18. His delegation supported the restructuring of the Department, which should give new impetus to the activities of DPI. In accordance with the recommendations of the Committee on Programme and Co-ordination, greater objectivity should be exercised in appointing DPI officials on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, particularly in the appointment of senior and middle-level officials from developing countries. He agreed with the view that DPI should accord particular priority to the struggle against apartheid, the question of Palestine and the cause of Namibia. Lastly, he stressed that the functions of the Middle East/Arabic Unit should be strengthened and expanded.

19. Mr. MONTGOMERY (United States of America) stressed his delegation's commitment to freedom of opinion and expression as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right to impart and receive information inhered in individuals, not their Governments. Freedom of the press was an integral part of freedom of information and ensured individuals unimpeded access to diverse sources of information to develop more fully their human potential. Freedom of the press and free access to information were fundamental corner-stones of a just and democratic society. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the numerous expressions of support by other delegations for the principles of the free flow of information and freedom of the press.

20. He reiterated his Government's position that language used to justify restrictions on that fundamental right must not be introduced into the draft resolution on information. The phrase "the principle of sovereign equality among nations extends also to this field", referring to the field of information, was especially troubling to his delegation. While the United States fully upheld the principle of sovereign equality of nations, that principle must not be used to justify restrictions on the flow of information into and out of countries, thereby limiting the fundamental right of individuals to receive uncensored information about the world around them. The way to reduce the great differences in the media infrastructures in countries throughout the world was to increase the human and material resources of the media, including the private media, in developing countries. The United States would continue to participate in that worthy endeavour.

21. DPI should be given a balanced agenda. Its resources should not be monopolized for use in a few areas, to the exclusion of others. The Department's agenda should reflect the priorities of all Member States, and DPI should be asked to co-operate with all regional groups and organizations. His delegation agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information that the Department was overmandated. DPI should be given greater flexibility in programming so that it could react more effectively to events as they occurred. Furthermore, the Department should focus its work exclusively on United Nations activities. The United States favoured a prudent, rational restructuring of DPI and supported the objectives of the restructuring process. In that connection, he pointed out that changing administrative structures was the prerogative of the Secretary-General as the chief administrative officer of the Organization. Member States should essentially be concerned with results. The flexibility of the Secretary-General in that regard should not be limited.

22. Mr. ONG (Singapore) said that it was widely recognized that television had far outpaced the other media in the dissemination of knowledge, reshaping people's lives by the sheer force of its visual imagery. However, while television helped to modernize societies, there were also inherent problems for the developing countries with the arrival of new technology.

23. Communication satellites were used to transmit television programmes with increasing regularity and decreasing cost. Millions of viewers in the United States and Western Europe received up to a dozen national and foreign cable television channels daily. The Western Europeans were said to fear that the new

(Mr. Ong, Singapore)

technologies would bring a flood of television programmes from the United States that would strongly influence the minds of their young people. They were considering the idea of subsidizing their own enterprises to compete with programmes from the United States, and it had been suggested that a kind of cultural bulwark should be built against the onslaught of that country's media.

24. If the developed societies in Western Europe were concerned about the impact of new technologies on their populations, the developing countries, whose political and socio-economic systems were in most cases still fragile, had all the more at stake. The onslaught of television images portraying the lifestyles, customs and values of the West and using hard-sell techniques could create major problems for recipient countries seeking to preserve their national identity and traditions. Furthermore, it should be asked whether the developing countries could withstand the massive impact of programmes meant for consumers and viewers in the Western countries.

25. The developing nations must study the technological advances in the communication and entertainment industries of the advanced countries to determine their implications and prevent negative effects on their societies. The creation of rising expectations in the most vulnerable segments of the populations of developing countries, namely children and youth, had a very negative impact. Young people in developing countries were exposed almost daily to the different lifestyles and values of foreign societies. The result was a constant erosion of the traditions of the recipient societies, accompanied by a growing desire for the trappings of modern living displayed in the imported television programmes. That phenomenon, together with other socio-economic developments, could affect the political stability of the developing countries. While modernization and economic progress were accompanied by the discarding of out-dated ideas and norms, the erosion of long-standing and positive values had seriously weakened the moral fibre and cultural heritage of the younger generation in the developing countries. The profound implications of the social instability caused by that phenomenon could not be ignored. If the developed countries could appreciate the threat of possible social dislocation, then both the developed and developing countries should be able to address those problems with greater urgency.

26. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the work carried out by the Committee on Information and other related agencies of the United Nations system. In the light of the wide divergence of views on the many practical difficulties in the area of information, the progress achieved thus far was commendable. His Government assisted activities in that field in whatever way it could.

27. Mr. GREEN (Canada) said that the vastness and linguistic and cultural diversity of Canada posed enormous challenges in the fields of communications and information. Successive Canadian Governments had been committed to the development of extensive and flexible communication systems and to bringing the most modern communication services, not just to urban areas, but also to rural and remote and northern areas. Much of the technology that had been developed and adapted for Canadian conditions could be applied successfully and appropriately in developing countries. A case in point was the use of solar-powered microwave relay stations in some developing countries.

(Mr. Green, Canada)

28. His Government was also very aware of, and sympathetic to, the concerns of most developing - and many developed - countries about the need to promote and enhance their own cultural and national identity in the face of competing programmes and information flows from outside. In the developing global information economy, flows of information could not simply be one-way if countries were to maintain their economic viability and cultural identity.

29. In Canada, 90 per cent of the population lived within 100 miles of the border with the United States of America. The two countries shared a common language, and television and radio broadcasts could be received on either side of the border. Newspapers and magazines of either country were freely available in the other. The potential for Canada's unique cultural identity to be subsumed by that of the United States was great. However, that had not happened because successive Canadian Governments, in co-operation with private industry, had been committed to supporting and promoting Canadian culture. The Canadian Radio, Television and Telecommunications Commission had adopted a non-restrictive approach to regulating Canadian broadcasting whereby imbalances were redressed through the creation of new opportunities and new vehicles for communication.

30. He shared the sentiments expressed by the representative of Greece on behalf of the members of the European Economic Community to the effect that freedom of information and freedom of thought, opinion and expression were basic tenets of society. While the desire of countries to have their message heard by the world's media was understandable, that could not be achieved by trying to control the media or hamper their freedom. It must be done by creating new communication vehicles which could compete for a fair share of the attention of the information consumer. Multilateral co-operation mechanisms, such as UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication and the work of the International Telecommunication Union in technical co-operation and development, could provide opportunities to close the communications technology gap between developing and developed countries. Canada supported such efforts and hoped that those vital programmes would be able to count on a broader base of financial support.

31. International and bilateral development agencies must also accord higher priority to the indissoluble link between communications and development. The work of international non-governmental organizations such as the Pacific Telecommunications Council and the International Institute of Communications was also of crucial importance. The United Nations itself had a right and a duty to compete for a share of the attention of information consumers. However, that could be done, not simply by producing more information, but by ensuring that the information produced was timely, interesting and relevant, both internationally and locally. It must also be credible.

32. His delegation was gratified by the review and restructuring of DPI under the direction of the Under-Secretary-General. He fully supported the Under-Secretary-General's efforts to improve co-ordination of the various components of the Department's information programme and to increase its capacity to measure the actual impact of its programmes. He was confident that the restructuring of the Department would assist it in making its products more

(Mr. Green, Canada)

relevant and credible. A restructured, more efficient Department would also be able to respond more effectively to the needs of the Organization and its Members. The results achieved to date had been encouraging. Creative reform took time and could cause some dislocation. However, he was confident that, with the support and encouragement of all concerned, such reforms would be successful, and he urged all delegations to continue to support that process.

33. For the first time in many years, the Committee on Information had endeavoured to try to reach a consensus on a number of key issues. The draft recommendations contained in annex VII of the Committee's report (A/43/21) provided a reasonable basis for compromise, and the progress achieved thus far in seeking a consensus solution was encouraging. He urged all Member States to continue to support the Committee in its work.

34. Mrs. LEGWAILA (Botswana) said that her delegation, while fully supporting the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, was deeply concerned that the drastic cuts in the staff of regional radio units would have a negative impact on programme delivery. She wondered what would happen to the services for the developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, as mandated by the General Assembly only a few years earlier. Botswana, like other developing countries, had benefited from those services in the past and had greatly appreciated them. The importance of radio, particularly in African countries, where television was still either a luxury or non-existent, could not be over-emphasized. Consequently, any cuts should be made elsewhere. The cuts described far exceeded the 15 per cent reduction in posts recommended by the Group of 18. Moreover, the cuts were being made at the lower, rather than the higher, echelons of the Department.

35. Her delegation found it difficult to understand a number of the issues raised by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information regarding the anti-apartheid radio programmes. The concern of the southern African countries regarding the radio programmes mandated by the General Assembly to counter the insidious propaganda of the apartheid régime in South Africa could be readily understood. It was her delegation's hope that DPI would do its utmost to adhere strictly to the mandate assigned to it by the General Assembly in resolutions 32/105 and 33/183. In resolution 33/183, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to intensify and expand the production of radio programmes to be broadcast to South Africa. And, in its report to the thirty-third session of the General Assembly (A/C.5/33/103), the Fifth Committee had stated that the writing and production of original programmes in English and their adaptation into the other languages spoken in South Africa would continue to be undertaken on the basis of the planned level of production of 365 original programmes. That would mean a total production of 1,825 programmes a year, a figure which her delegation would have expected to be exceeded by 1988.

36. Also according to the Fifth Committee's report, the output provided for in General Assembly resolution 33/183 would involve the continuous employment of approximately 15 outside contractors, in addition to special contributions, as well as intensive contacts with approximately 25 national broadcasting organizations.

(Mrs. Legwaila, Botswana)

The financial allocation for those and related activities had amounted to \$US 573,000, thus demonstrating the political will of the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs to mobilize world public opinion for the eradication of apartheid in South Africa.

37. Her delegation attached the utmost importance to the question of apartheid, particularly at a time when the racist régime of South Africa had multiplied its propaganda activities tenfold within South Africa itself, in illegally-occupied Namibia, in the front-line States and, indeed, throughout the world. The régime wished the world to believe its own doctored version of what apartheid was. The banning of newspapers had become part of daily life in South Africa. The régime was clearly continuing its drive to gag the press. Consequently, it was no time for retrenchment or relaxation on the part of DPI.

38. Her delegation noted with great concern the combining of the anti-apartheid radio programmes with other programmes dealing with different issues. Such a step could dilute the focus of the United Nations struggle against apartheid and the illegal occupation of Namibia.

39. Her delegation supported the establishment of a new world information and communication order, which would help to close the information gap between developed and developing countries and enhance the cause of world peace.

40. Her delegation took note with great interest of the report submitted by the Director-General of UNESCO (A/43/670). Like many third world countries which were at the bottom of the communication ladder, Botswana welcomed IPDC and appealed to the international community to support it financially.

41. Mr. MENESES (Nicaragua) said that, at their meeting at Nicosia in September 1988, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the non-aligned countries had attached considerable importance to information questions and had set out a number of objectives and proposals designed to achieve justice in the field of information. The ministers had agreed on the need to strengthen co-ordination within the United Nations system, with a view to implementing the principles of the new world information and communication order. They had also agreed to support the United Nations Department of Public Information to enable it to increase printed and audio-visual information, create greater public awareness of issues of concern to the non-aligned countries and ensure that public opinion was better informed of priority issues.

42. The communication and information media played a decisive role in efforts to establish peace and justice. Consequently, one of the main obstacles encountered by developing countries was the persistent refusal of a number of powerful countries to use their sophisticated information technology to assist them in finding solutions to their problems. On the contrary, they used that technology to perpetuate their dominance. A number of industrialized countries monopolized and manipulated information as an ideological weapon to perpetuate situations of political and cultural colonialism, to foment disorder, anarchy and subversion in sovereign countries and to slander peoples, national liberation movements and causes which did not serve their interests.

(Mr. Meneses, Nicaragua)

43. Specific examples of such practices were Radio 15 September, which the United States Central Intelligence Agency used against his country, and the so-called Radio Martí, Radio Truth and others, which fostered hatred, disorder and death in various parts of the world in the name of democracy. A change of attitude on the part of Governments of a number of industrialized countries was essential, as was a united front on the part of the third world countries.

44. The United Nations had an important role to play in the concerted efforts to establish a new world information and communication order. The international community should provide its full support to DPI and the United Nations, and the developed countries should assist the developing countries in strengthening their information infrastructure so as to enable them to develop their own information policies freely and independently, in keeping with their history and their social, cultural and political values. In that regard, efforts must be made to continue to strengthen co-operation between various organizations of the United Nations system and the non-aligned countries, and in particular with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries. Information and communication technology must be used to achieve the respect, co-operation and understanding among nations which were essential for future peace.

45. Mr. ISHIDA (Japan) said that, in the current highly interdependent world, economic development and social progress could only be achieved through a free flow of information and adequate channels of communication at both national and international levels. The candid discussions in the Special Political Committee had not been as fruitful as his delegation had hoped. The impasse in the debate on a new world information and communication order and on certain other matters had become a serious stumbling block in efforts to reach a consensus.

46. His delegation commended the regional groups and China for their constructive efforts to reach a consensus among Member States at the last session of the Committee on Information. Japan hoped that the recent improvements in the international climate, which had led to the settlement of regional conflicts, would also prevail in the Committee and contribute to achieving an agreement in a spirit of mutual understanding and compromise.

47. While his delegation understood the desire of the developing countries to correct imbalances in the field of information and communication and to gain wider and more accurate coverage internationally for events in their own countries, it was not very useful to engage in ideological debate on the definition of a new world information and communication order. The best way to correct imbalances and encourage a wider dissemination of information based on the principles of freedom of expression was through co-operation between developing and developed countries and through the practical activities of DPI and other United Nations bodies. For that reason, Japan extended financial and technical co-operation to such efforts as IPDC, and the relevant programmes of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which aimed at enhancing the information and communication infrastructures of developing countries.

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(Mr. Ishida, Japan)

48. Although his delegation appreciated DPI's efforts to rationalize its work and revitalize its structure, such efforts should not result in an expanded administrative structure or entail financial implications. While his Government understood the desire of underrepresented groups or countries to redress imbalances in the DPI staff and appreciated the efforts of DPI to that end, geographical balance should be pursued in the Secretariat as a whole and not on a department-by-department basis.

49. One of DPI's primary purposes was to disseminate information about the activities and achievements of the United Nations, which was actively engaged in most questions that directly or indirectly affected the international community. It was therefore reasonable that DPI should likewise be expected to cover a wide variety of fields. In that context, his delegation noted with satisfaction that the international mass media had recently been giving fuller coverage to the activities of the United Nations, particularly those relating to the peaceful settlement of regional conflicts, and referred in that context to an international symposium on United Nations peace-keeping and peace-making activities held in Tokyo in September 1988 and sponsored by DPI and a Japanese newspaper company. Such timely efforts contributed to a greater understanding among the Japanese people of the United Nations activities in that field. Inasmuch as DPI was the central body within the Organization for public information activities, his Government hoped that it would continue to make every possible effort to fulfil its important mandate.

50. DPI information activities concerning the political questions discussed at the United Nations must be balanced and impartial and reflect the range of views and interests of different countries. Despite existing differences of opinion on questions relating to information, his delegation was confident that an agreement could eventually be reached in a spirit of compromise and co-operation.

51. Mr. HANNAN (Bangladesh) said that his delegation noted with satisfaction the amendments and revisions being made in the reorganization process in consonance with the concerns expressed by delegations in the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) and the Committee on Information. The multi-media approach given to such priority areas as the question of Palestine, the anti-apartheid programmes, the question of Namibia, the debt impact, the Iran-Iraq war and United Nations peace-keeping efforts deserved the Committee's full appreciation. His delegation also noted with satisfaction DPI's contribution to the development of communication infrastructures in the developing countries. It was to be hoped that adequate funds for DPI would not be found wanting.

52. It was urgently necessary for the Committee on Information to submit a set of recommendations to give clear guidance and a mandate to DPI. Although the Group of 77 had shown its good intentions by submitting its draft recommendations along with the proposed amendments of other regional groups in the hope of reaching a consensus resolution in the Committee, if certain strident statements and the increasing demands placed upon the Group of 77 were any indication, consensus was not imminent. The stalemate was largely due to the uncompromising stance increasingly taken on the document prepared by the Group of 77, particularly with

(Mr. Hannan, Bangladesh)

regard to the definition of a new world information and communication order and a number of well-known political questions. The proposed amendment was very selective and provided a truncated definition of the concept of a new order. If accepted, the proposal would radically alter the substance and spirit of what his delegation considered the concept of the new world information and communication order, the goal of which must always remain constant: more justice, equality and reciprocity in information exchange, less dependence on communication flows, and more self-reliance and cultural identity.

53. It was unfortunate that third world protests against the dominant flow of information from industrialized countries were often misconstrued as attacks on freedom of the press. Bangladesh valued highly the free flow of information as an essential part of participatory democracy, and it was a painful experience to be subjected to the ritual harangues on the virtues of freedom of press and information as if they were the exclusive property of a certain group of countries.

54. The world had become increasingly interdependent, and a collective endeavour must be made, through full use of communications, to promote that trend.

55. Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said that, although information played an important role in promoting international understanding, peace and development, it had been perverted to foster misunderstanding and conflicts between countries and regions. It was to be hoped that with the spirit of understanding between the super-Powers, the airwaves and other communication media would be used to promote peace and development. For the developing countries, information and communication constituted an indispensable tool for imparting new skills as well as for national mobilization for development.

56. The wide disparity between the developing countries and the developed world in the field of information was self-evident. A handful of agencies in the developed countries controlled the dissemination of 80 per cent of the world's information, the developing countries being passive recipients. The Group of 77 had always called for the establishment of a new world information and communication order so as to redress that imbalance.

57. His delegation had discerned a clear reluctance on the part of those who occupy a position of dominance in the current information structure to take concrete and effective steps to redress the imbalance. It was precisely for that reason that the gallant efforts by UNESCO to help developing countries to build their information infrastructures had not attracted adequate financial resources. Instead, enormous efforts had been made to misrepresent the new world information and communication order. The Group of 77, in its efforts to reach a consensus, had been most flexible in its attempts to accommodate reservations voiced. Unfortunately, each concession had given rise to new demands. The new world information order had never challenged the principle of free flow of information. Uganda had a free press and strongly believed in that principle. However, the free flow of information, as currently espoused by the developed countries and as currently structured, was tantamount to a call for a one-way flow of information.

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(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

58. The mass media in all developed countries formed an integral part of the power structure, and they accepted certain national or elitist premises as self-evident truths. They also served as important links in the periodic campaigns to disseminate bias. For example, the Western news media had been more concerned in finding a scapegoat for the origin of AIDS and stimulating the most primitive racial prejudices rather than addressing the problem in its true perspective.

59. A number of delegations had rightly underscored the importance of article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but article 28 of the same Declaration was equally important, namely, that everyone was entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration could be fully realized.

60. The point in defining the new world information order as an evolving and continuing process was to rectify the imbalance in the information flow. That definition had been reached as a compromise by UNESCO with a view to restoring the near-universality of UNESCO, which had been somewhat jeopardized by the withdrawal of certain member States. But even after the compromise had been approved, those members had never rejoined. Arrived at in a spirit of accommodation, the compromise had instead become a pretext for other groups to make further demands. It was regrettable that such demands had obscured and distorted the problem of information imbalances in the current order.

61. Uganda was, however, gratified on the whole that there was a greater appreciation of the call for a new world information order, which offered potential benefits to developing and developed countries alike. His Government was a strong believer in sharing experiences between developing countries, and therefore supported the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries and the Pan African News Agency. Those institutions offered opportunities for collective self-reliance, and DPI and other international institutions should give them their assistance. Uganda also supported IPDC, and appealed for increased contributions to its funding.

62. His delegation believed that DPI had a special role to play in the field of communication in presenting the image of the United Nations to Member States and the world public as a whole.

63. The proposals for restructuring DPI had raised legitimate apprehensions, since they could have a negative impact on programme delivery mandated by the General Assembly. Uganda fully subscribed to the views expressed in paragraph 84 of the CPC report (A/43/16/Part II) on providing adequate resources, including staff, to the sections and units in DPI concerned with Namibia, apartheid and Palestine and that those units should be accorded an equitable treatment in their levels of supervision; in paragraph 86, calling on the Secretary-General to accelerate the process of achieving a balanced geographical distribution of posts, especially at the senior level; and in paragraph 87, calling for the restoration of important language programmes. His delegation looked forward to the Under-Secretary-General providing information on how she had proceeded to implement those recommendations.

(Mr. Irumba, Uganda)

64. Uganda would support those reforms that would enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations and that were in line with General Assembly resolution 42/213, which must be seen as a whole. The legitimate concern of the staff must also be addressed. The new structure should come into operation after it had been approved by the General Assembly.

65. His delegation commended DPI for the splendid work it had done in drawing world attention to the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. The African recovery publication had been of high equality and Development Forum had provided invaluable information on social and economic development. It was necessary for the two to be given adequate resources. His Government attached importance to the information centres and commended the Under-Secretary-General for accommodating some of the concerns expressed in CPC.

66. Mr. MANSOUR (Observer, the Palestine Liberation Organization) said that the information provided by the news media came in many forms, the audio-visual media currently representing a particularly effective way of reporting on the truth. During the year of the uprising in the occupied Arab territories, the audio-visual media had left an impact on all people with a sense of justice. The film to be shown after the meeting was in appreciation of the excellent work and courage of hundreds of international reporters, who had objectively reported to the whole world on the brutality of the Israeli occupying Power as well as the bravery and determination of the Palestinian people in the occupied Arab territories in their efforts to attain independence. In that context, he paid tribute to the seven Palestinian reporters expelled to Lebanon, the 45 others administratively detained and the American free-lance photographer, who had been injured by an Israeli bullet while covering the uprising.

67. It was the duty of the international media, and of DPI in particular, to expose the refusal by the Israelis to allow the media to continue covering the uprising.

68. The call by the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council in January 1988 (S/19443, para. 43) for the international media to continue to be allowed unhindered access to the events should be respected and implemented. Perhaps the time had come for DPI to produce a film on the uprising.

The meeting rose at 5.30 p.m.