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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 16th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NOWORTYA (Poland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 78: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS IN ALL THEIR ASPECTS (continued) (A/SPC/43/L.6 and L.7)

1. Mr. ONONAIYE (Nigeria) introduced draft resolutions A/SPC/43/L.6 and L.7. He drew attention to paragraphs 2 and 3 of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.6, urging the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations to continue its work with particular focus on financial issues and inviting Member States to submit suggestions on peace-keeping operations in all their aspects. With regard to draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.7, pertaining to the admission of the People's Republic of China to the Special Committee, he recalled that China's application for membership had enjoyed the support of all delegations concerned with the issue. After expressing appreciation to all Member States which had taken part in the informal consultations designed to produce unanimous approval of the two texts, he recommended that the draft resolutions should be adopted without a vote.
2. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee accepted that recommendation.
3. Draft resolutions A/SPC/43/L.6 and L.7 were adopted without a vote.
4. Mr. ALPTUNA (Turkey) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.6. However, it wished to put on record its view that the consent of the parties directly involved was a vital element for the success of peace-keeping operations. That principle must be scrupulously respected. Moreover, the mandate given to the peace-keeping forces should not ignore the realities of a particular situation. Paragraph 3 of the resolution was too restrictive. It was to be hoped that a way could be found to allow States which were not Members of the United Nations likewise to submit observations and suggestions if they happened to be one of the parties directly involved in a peace-keeping situation. That would enable the Special Committee to submit a more balanced and comprehensive report.
5. Mr. WANG Xuexian (China), expressing his gratitude to the delegations which had welcomed his country's application for membership in the Special Committee on Peace-keeping Operations, said that it would work with all other Member States in fulfilling its obligations.

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

6. Mr. MAJID (Afghanistan) said that the flow of information in the international arena continued to be unbalanced and detrimental to the developing nations. Certain industrialized countries had at their disposal highly developed information and communication technology which was frequently used as a tool of psychological warfare against sovereign States. A glaring example was seen in relation to Afghanistan. More than 50 Western radio stations were waging an unbridled anti-Afghan campaign.

(Mr. Majid, Afghanistan)

7. For those reasons, his delegation had supported from the beginning the idea of a new world information and communication order. Similarly, it endorsed the goal, addressed by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, of eliminating the colonial legacy in the sphere of information. The logic of supporting a new information and communication order was simple and obvious and closely linked with promoting peace and stability in the world. The United Nations system and the developed countries should co-operate with the developing countries with a view to strengthening their information and communication infrastructures and enabling them to develop their own policies in that area. It was high time to emphasize the central role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and to give full support to its International Programme for the Development of Communications (IPDC), which constituted an important step in the development of such infrastructures.

8. Efforts to achieve more balanced information and communication were now more urgent than ever because of the expanded role of the mass media in recent times. In his country, those responsible for the mass media considered it their duty to disseminate information about United Nations activities and to publicize efforts aimed at curbing tension and strengthening international peace and security. The best way to ensure a just and balanced flow of information among the peoples of the world was to establish a new world information and communication order, and his country would co-operate in achieving that goal.

9. Ms. METCALFE (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that freedom of thought, opinion and expression were a corner-stone of the human rights system to which the United Nations was dedicated. While imbalances existed, for a variety of reasons, in the world-wide distribution of news, they should not be redressed at the expense of the principle of freedom of information. It was necessary to break down and remove obstacles to the free flow of information, not to create new ones; a pragmatic, rather than an ideological approach, was called for.

10. The Nordic countries were prepared to support a new world information and communication order provided that it was firmly based on respect for fundamental human rights, including the principle of freedom of information. While they remained willing to discuss the relevant issues with the aim of reaching a consensus, the mere repetition of previous statements would be counter-productive. What was necessary was a readiness to co-operate in a spirit of compromise.

11. UNESCO played a key role in the dissemination of information. A large number of its programmes were aimed at developing resources for communication and information in many regions of the world, particularly in the developing countries. IPDC was essential for the achievement of information and communication infrastructures in developing countries. Closer co-operation between it and the United Nations Development Programme was important. Development Forum needed a sound and stable financial basis, and consideration should be given to placing it on the Organization's regular budget.

(Ms. Metcalfe, Denmark)

12. In recent years, the Committee on Information had made progress towards an increasing degree of consensus in thought if not in action. A consensus should have materialized during the summer of 1988 in view of the co-operative attitude of all parties. It was to be hoped that agreement would be forthcoming on a widely acceptable set of recommendations.

13. The Nordic countries supported the ongoing efforts to restructure the Department of Public Information (DPI) with a view to increasing its efficiency and economic performance. In their view, information on economic and social questions should be given the highest possible priority among the issues dealt with by DPI. They looked forward to the completion of the evaluation, undertaken by DPI, of the activities of the United Nations information centres.

14. The increasingly positive media coverage of the United Nations not only reflected its successes in the political arena; it was also the result of an active and effective United Nations information policy. The award of the 1988 Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations peace-keeping forces was an excellent opportunity for further positive reporting. To that end, an invitation had been extended to a number of correspondents accredited to the United Nations to visit Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark and contingents of peace-keeping forces.

15. Mr. DIMITROV (Bulgaria) said that the enormous flow of information throughout the world had the potential to contribute to mutual understanding between nations; however, it could also breed hostility and cold-war stereotypes.

16. Questions relating to information were inseparable from the preservation of world peace and security, owing to the decisive role of the mass media in forming public opinion. That role was growing with the development of the latest technology, conferring greater responsibilities on the mass media at a time when openness and the provision of accurate information were becoming essential to the democratization of international relations. For that reason, his delegation viewed information as a component of the future comprehensive system of international security. The modern world was entering a new stage of development in which new political thinking was called for. His country was taking part in the process with good will and perseverance, believing that under the current conditions, one of the most important tasks of the Committee on Information and DPI should be to seek practical means of involving the media in strengthening the atmosphere of confidence.

17. New political thinking, which had already achieved positive results in a number of fields, should serve as the foundation for restructuring international relations in the sphere of information. For years, a huge disproportion had been observed in the distribution of mass media throughout the world. The flow of information from the developed and the developing countries was severely unbalanced. His delegation fully supported the demands of the developing countries for the establishment of a just and more efficient world information and communication order which would strengthen peace and international understanding and would be based on a free, balanced flow of information. The international

(Mr. Dimitrov, Bulgaria)

organizations, and UNESCO in particular, had an important role to play in that endeavour. His country welcomed and supported the efforts of UNESCO with regard to the development of a communication infrastructure in the developing countries.

18. International relations in the field of information could only be reorganized if the United Nations took creative action. DPI should publicize the Organization's aims and functions and, of course, its successes, in order to further the recent growing respect for international organizations that reflected the collective will and interests of nations. Bulgaria supported the Soviet proposal on the adoption of an international information programme under the auspices of the United Nations. The time had come to develop international legal norms regulating free co-operation between States in the area of information.

19. His delegation was in favour of restructuring DPI: it would like to see a revitalized Department, with a geographically balanced, efficient and professional staff, guided by the priorities set for it by the General Assembly.

20. Mr. MONTANE (Cuba) said that information had become a crucial field, where political tensions and interests operated behind the transboundary flows of information and the new satellite communication networks. The world was on the brink of a new era of instantaneous news transmission, and that could spell a new form of dependency for countries without adequate national policies or the requisite infrastructures.

21. The imbalances in the dissemination of information had focused debate on the new world information and communication order, the aim of which was to promote development and peace not through regulatory measures but through an irreversible movement towards the right to communicate and to be informed objectively on the basis of equality and respect. That would never come about without greater recourse to multilateralism.

22. The Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Non-Aligned Countries held in Cyprus in September 1988 had given in-depth consideration to questions such as the decolonization of information, the development of infrastructures, technical training in the field and a greater exchange of information, which would entail strengthening the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries. The Ministers for Foreign Affairs had urged co-operation among the developing countries in dealing with the imbalances and the rapid technological advances in the field and had agreed that there must be greater co-ordination within the United Nations system with a view to implementing the new world information and communication order. They had supported DPI efforts to create greater public awareness of issues of interest to the non-aligned countries and of priority to the United Nations.

23. In view of the deteriorating situation in southern Africa, Cuba believed that DPI should highlight information on Namibia and on apartheid. Another priority should be the question of Palestine and the latest developments there. The acute conflict in Central America was linked to the struggle of the peoples of that region for peace and independence.

(Mr. Montane, Cuba)

24. In September, the Co-ordinating Committee of the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries had met in Jakarta and adopted a series of resolutions aimed at extending the Pool's role as a useful instrument for two-way exchange of information.

25. The restructuring of DPI, which should be carefully monitored, must follow the lines laid down by the General Assembly and must maintain the requisite balance within the Department.

26. The manifest improvement in the international political climate ought to be championed by the media, which should be more active in promoting non-confrontation and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. An example of the reverse was the sustained anti-Cuban broadcasting by "Radio Marti", which had cloaked itself in the doctrine of the free flow of information but which constituted a hostile and aggressive use of the media that had been repeatedly denounced by the Non-Aligned Movement. Such a distorted application by the United States of a supposed freedom of information was an argument for the urgent need to establish a new world information and communication order. The Committee on Information and DPI must be cognizant of the true concepts underlying that so-called freedom, which was actually the freedom to control world-wide communication and information networks in order to further a consumer culture and freedom for transnational enterprises.

27. Information and communication were inextricably bound up with the basic and urgent political, social and economic problems that afflicted a great part of the world.

28. Mrs. RUIZ ZAPATA (Mexico) said that her Government had always maintained during the Organization's so-called credibility crisis that its tarnished image was not a product of public opinion as such but rather of the campaign against multilateralism organized by the large news agencies that controlled world-wide information. The message now being conveyed by the media was that the image of the United Nations had markedly improved.

29. The information function of the United Nations therefore became doubly important and the role of DPI crucial. The Department must seize the opportunity to capitalize on recent successes and must at the same time not neglect the other aspects of the Organization's activities. It would be a serious mistake to fail to call attention to still unresolved conflicts such as those in Palestine, Central America, Namibia or Western Sahara. DPI should give priority to producing information on the serious economic crisis in the developing countries, as well as on the debt problem and the deteriorating social conditions that jeopardized development throughout the world. It must also provide serious and objective information on human rights, and use its capabilities to further the World Disarmament Campaign.

30. Those were the kinds of activities that could be expected to come out of the current restructuring of DPI, which should make the Department more efficient

(Mrs. Ruiz Zapata, Mexico)

without tampering with the priorities set by the General Assembly. DPI's faithful compliance with its mandate had to be carefully monitored, and Mexico looked forward to examining, at the next session of the Committee on Information, comprehensive and detailed reports on DPI activities after the restructuring. Clearly, unless more funds were assigned to it, its enormous potential would be severely limited.

31. While the Under-Secretary-General for Information had been skilful in finding new ways to transmit the message of the United Nations to the peoples of the world, special care must be taken to avoid marketing the Organization's image as if it were a media product. The United Nations represented the loftiest ideals known to mankind and they must be projected on that same high level.

32. Since the first call for the establishment of a new world information and communication order by UNESCO in 1980, there had unfortunately been no change in either the global information structure or in its way of informing, or misinforming, the world public. To offer only one example, Mexico had repeatedly denounced the manner in which the media had dealt with its efforts to combat drug trafficking, and their negative impact on relations between the States trying to resolve that problem.

33. It was indeed difficult to understand how any delegation could be opposed to such goals as the elimination of the current imbalances, the negative effects of certain monopolies, and barriers to the free circulation of information and ideas; upholding the freedom of the press and information; and ensuring respect for the cultural identity of all nations and the right of all peoples to participate in international exchanges of information on an equal footing. The consensus among Member States had been undermined by the rejection of those objectives by some of the very countries which had supported them. UNESCO was barely recovering from the crisis that had ensued, and the universality which was the basis for the United Nations system had still not been re-established.

34. Although it had been difficult for the Group of 77 to adapt to the new situation, it had moved its position closer to those held by other groups of countries. In spite of the difficulties which had arisen at the forty-first session of the General Assembly, the Group had continued to search for a generally acceptable solution to the problem of defining a new world information and communication order.

35. Under those conditions, the Special Political Committee should act cautiously. Consensus must not be based on a resolution which was devoid of content or represented the interests of only one region. Its resolution should renew the mandate of the Committee on Information and give clear guidelines to the Department of Public Information, which should focus its efforts in the general context of the new world information and communication order and seek to define it.

36. Mr. JANOWSKI (Poland) said that the establishment of the new, more just and more effective world information and communication order was an evolving and

(Mr. Janowski, Poland)

continuous process which should serve the international community as a whole. The guidelines for such an order should be based on the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant UNESCO documents and recognized norms of international law. The United Nations Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace was also important in that regard.

37. It was the obligation of the mass media to foster positive trends in international relations. In that connection, he stressed the close link between the question of information and that of international security and trust among nations. Every State bore the responsibility for the content of the information which it provided to its own public as well as that which was disseminated from its territory to other countries. Poland firmly supported the principles of enhancing mutual trust, understanding and peace in the field of information and communication. He shared the view that it was necessary to make every effort to achieve a real dialogue among all cultures and individuals on an equal footing and that it was essential to correct the inequalities that existed between North and South in that area. Furthermore, serious imbalances continued to exist in the dissemination of information between East and West. His delegation was looking forward to agreed recommendations on that question.

38. The information contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/639) was very useful and largely met the request made by Poland the previous year that DPI should give the widest possible dissemination to information concerning acute world economic problems. His delegation was still looking forward to the publication of information materials on the external debt. Such information should cover both developing countries and others experiencing serious debt problems.

39. He stressed the timeliness of the work of DPI relating to United Nations peace-keeping operations, in view of their paramount importance for the maintenance of international peace and security. Poland, however, regretted the delay in the submission by the Secretary-General of a feasibility study on the consolidation and co-ordination of all United Nations public information activities with specific reference to financial implications as well as to the effectiveness of the Department as the focal point for public information activities. His delegation would appreciate a clarification on that point from the Secretariat. Lastly, he supported the Soviet proposal to set up a committee to ensure regular contacts between the Committee on Information and DPI.

40. Mr. RUDNIK (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) stressed the need to complete the restructuring of the activities of the Department of Public Information in order to enhance its effectiveness. Due attention should be given to the Department's major projects in accordance with the priorities laid down by the General Assembly. In that connection, he underscored the need to ensure that countries belonging to the various regions were represented in the projects as broadly as possible. A number of draft recommendations had been included in the annexes to the report of the Committee on Information (A/43/21). Since there were no irreconcilable differences between them, progress in reaching agreement on the concepts in question could be expected. In that connection, his delegation



(Mr. Rudnik, Byelorussian SSR)

welcomed the work done by UNESCO, and, in particular, supported the statement in paragraph 18 of its report (A/43/670).

41. IPDC had an important role to play in the implementation of the new UNESCO strategy. Fully aware of the developing countries' concern at the inequitable situation in the field of information and communication, the Byelorussian SSR, together with other socialist countries, provided assistance to developing countries in setting up and strengthening their news media, particularly by training their journalists.

42. The proposal to set up a world information programme under the auspices of the United Nations to inform peoples objectively about one another could be an important practical step to meet the needs of the developing countries. Setting up such a programme was in accordance with the initiative aimed at establishing a world information centre put forward in Geneva in 1986 by the non-governmental international organizations at their consultative meeting on issues related to information. The main task of the centre would be to establish a new global information system among the various non-governmental organizations in order to provide information on global problems on a global scale. UNESCO could also help set up such a programme using its telechannels and computer network.

43. The policy of glasnost pursued by his Government advanced the cause of peace and co-operation and promoted the establishment of a nuclear-free and non-violent world and civilized international relations. It helped resolve complex international problems at the inter-State and intergovernmental levels. The mass media of the Byelorussian SSR had actively joined in the process of perestroika under way in the Soviet Union.

44. Ms. LIPPOLDT (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that her delegation regretted the tendentious statement made by the representative of Cuba during the current deliberations, which were marked by a desire to accommodate different views and reach a consensus. The Voice of America had been broadcasting to Cuba for more than 20 years. Radio Martí, which had begun its broadcasts in 1985, had not increased the power of its transmissions and did not use frequencies that interfered with Cuban domestic broadcasting. There had been no derogation from the Voice of America standards of objectivity and accuracy and the Radio Martí programme was transmitted on a frequency that had been legally registered with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

45. Her Government, on the other hand, was deeply concerned at the misuse of radio frequencies by the Cuban Government causing programme interference not only in her country but also in others in the Western hemisphere. The Cuban Government continued to do so in spite of the refusal of ITU to recognize its use of such frequencies. Lastly, she stressed that the real monopoly in the field of information was exercised by countries like Cuba, which controlled the news and information made available to their citizens.

46. Mr. MONTANE (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that virtually every year his delegation was obliged to denounce specific cases involving Radio Martí and the eight other broadcasting stations which were hostile to Cuba. In spite of that, Cuba had been working to keep two-way broadcasting between the two countries open. A report entitled Global Options, which was published in the United States, showed how the general public in that country was subjected to the official anti-Cuban propaganda of its Government and that United States policies concerning Cuba were hostile and aggressive. There had never been a public debate or exchange of opinions on relations between the United States and Cuba. Cuban teachers and students who had wished to travel to the United States to put forward their views had been denied visas by the authorities of that country. Global Options showed that of the more than 260 reports on Cuba published in the United States, more than 60 dealt with the subject of human rights. Everyone knew that such reports did not reflect the truth.

47. Ms. LIPPOLDT (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, merely wished to point out that Radio Havana broadcasts could be heard by the general public in the United States on the 9.5 frequency band.

48. Mr. MONTANE (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Radio Havana broadcast basic information on the real situation in Cuba in the field of culture, sports and politics to Latin American countries and the United States. For many years the United States had been suppressing information about the achievements of the Cuban revolution. Global Options pointed out that that was a basic policy of the United States Government.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.