



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NOWORYTA (Poland)

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AGENDA ITEM 79: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/SPC/43/L.12, L.13, L.24 and L.25)

1. Mr. TEKAYA (Tunisia), introducing draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 and L.13 on behalf of the Group of 77, said that draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 dealt with co-operation between all countries, the United Nations system as a whole, including the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and all others concerned in the establishment of a new world information and communication order. The draft referred to the important role that the media could play throughout the world in encouraging wider coverage of the efforts of the international community towards global development and ways of strengthening the information and communication infrastructures for the developing countries and facilitating their access to advanced technology. It also focused on United Nations activities in the field of information, particularly those of the Department of Public Information (DPI).
2. Draft resolution L.13 concerned primarily the activities of UNESCO in the field of information and communication. It reaffirmed General Assembly support for UNESCO, its Constitution and its ideals, as well as for the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). It also called for financial contributions to IPDC for staff, equipment, technologies and training resources.
3. The draft resolutions had been elaborated in such a way as to reflect accurately the importance that the international community attached to the various questions relating to information and to the essential role played by DPI in explaining the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter. The sponsors had made all efforts to take into account the various points of view expressed by regional groups and countries. Thus, draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 could be considered as the result of concessions made by the Group of 77 compared with the drafts submitted in previous years.
4. Mr. YUAN (China) said that, at the request of the Group of 77, his delegation had decided to withdraw its proposed amendments (document A/SPC/43/L.24) to draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 in order to facilitate the draft resolution's adoption.
5. Mr. LAGORIO (Argentina), speaking in explanation of the vote before the vote, said that in 1988, a real possibility had existed for reaching a consensus agreement. The challenge facing all Member States had been to show readiness to make concessions on a number of points. At the current time, however, it was necessary to begin defining the objectives of 1989 and focusing on the subject with a greater sense of responsibility. In that context, his delegation welcomed the gesture made by the delegation of China in withdrawing its proposed amendments (document A/SPC/43/L.24). The lesson of the current session was that it was not enough to unite all the objective elements for an agreement; it was also essential for all parties to manifest a true readiness to negotiate. His delegation had always worked for a consensus and it was therefore committed to continuing its

(Mr. Lagorio, Argentina)

efforts towards an agreement in 1989. Not only would a consensus on the new world information and communication order eliminate another area of conflict, but it would be of tangible benefit to developing countries. A new order, whose objective must be to eliminate existing imbalances in communication and information, could only be achieved if it was based on the full respect of the principle of freedom of information and communication.

6. In 1989, concessions would have to be made to achieve concrete results. However praiseworthy the principles being defended, it must be borne in mind that nations and peoples could only develop if their immediate needs were met.

7. Mr. NAHES (Brazil) said that his delegation regretted that the Special Political Committee once again had not been able to reach a consensus. After months of negotiations and postponed decisions, the Committee was back where it had stood in July. As a member of the Group of 77, his delegation would vote in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12. It would have preferred, however, to have worked towards a consensus text for adoption without a vote.

8. His delegation stressed its firm commitment to the new world information and communication order, the need to redress the imbalances among developing and developed countries in the field of information and communication, the freedom to seek and impart information and the responsibilities resulting therefrom, the pluralism of information sources, the State's restricted and qualified participation in that field and the access by developing countries to high technology in the area.

9. Mr. FISCHER (Uruguay) said that the Special Political Committee's efforts had been ensuring the effective exercise of freedom of expression. Achieving that goal presupposed plurality of sources of information, ideas and opinions in the quest to achieve equitable participation by all persons and nations in the information and communication field. By no means could the protection of that basic human right be achieved by imposing international planning or machinery. With that basic criterion in mind, his delegation would continue to support the essential aspects of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12.

10. His delegation regretted that an excellent opportunity for reaching a consensus on the issue had been missed. Such a consensus would serve as a starting-point for a sustained multilateral effort to improve the situations of the countries most in need so that freedom of information could gradually benefit other nations. Preconceptions, uncompromising and unrealistic attitudes and the misunderstanding, whether deliberate or not, of recent developments had weighed heavily in preventing a consensus, which could only be reached through an attitude of tolerance and a willingness to engage in dialogue and forego dogmatic approaches.

11. Mr. WOLFF (Colombia) said that although his delegation would vote in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.13, it was unfortunate that a consensus had not been reached; an opportunity for initiating a broad international renewal in the area of information had thus been wasted.

(Mr. Wolff, Colombia)

12. Colombia also regretted that no consensus had been adopted to condemn a form of censorship that was even worse than that usually exercised by Governments, namely, terrorist acts of violence against journalists. Those who violated freedom of information and the independent work of newspapers through violence and intimidation were seeking to impose a censorship that undermined democracy and its institutions.

13. It was to be hoped that the existing differences of opinion between a small number of countries could be overcome so that humanity could benefit fully from technological developments in the area.

14. Mr. NUÑEZ MOSQUERA (Cuba) said that his delegation would vote in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12, but regretted that no consensus had been reached. In 1989, Cuba would continue its efforts to establish a new world information and communication order, to eliminate existing imbalances in that area and to strengthen United Nations co-operation with the developing countries, particularly in the media realm.

15. Mr. GREEN (Canada) said that his delegation felt compelled to vote against draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12. It had hoped that it would be possible to reach a consensus, and indeed, considerable progress had been made on a consensus text based upon annex VII of the report of the Committee on Information. It had therefore been a great disappointment when the difficulties introduced by just a few countries had blocked an agreement.

16. Although the proposed consensus text had not been perfect, it had been the result of many compromises by all parties. It had been a considerable improvement over previous resolutions and had presented an excellent opportunity for agreement by all delegations.

17. The text of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 was a significant movement away from the consensus text that had been under discussion. It also represented a retreat from previous resolutions on the subject, removing as it did several references to the idea of a free flow of information and the objectivity and effectiveness of DPI. Furthermore, although his delegation accepted that DPI should co-operate with the regional news agencies and monitor significant meetings of various regional groups within the United Nations, it should not single out only one of those groups for special attention. DPI should also be allowed sufficient flexibility in both staffing and its restructuring efforts.

18. Although it would vote against the resolution, his delegation wished to reaffirm its willingness to co-operate towards achieving a consensus text at the forty-fourth session of the General Assembly.

19. Mr. HAENSEL (German Democratic Republic) said that the adoption of draft resolutions A/SPC/43/L.12 and L.13 would have a major impact on shaping democratic relations in the field of information and communication and on determining the substance of future DPI information programmes. The recent efforts to reach a

(Mr. Haensel, German
Democratic Republic)

consensus had been consistent with the spirit of co-operation that had reigned at the forty-third session of the General Assembly.

20. His Government was committed to democratizing international relations in the area of information and had consistently supported efforts undertaken by developing countries to overcome imbalances and injustice in the international exchange of information. His delegation had placed emphasis on the close link between freedom of information and the responsibility of the media and would therefore approve draft resolutions A/SPC/43/L.12 and L.13. A new world information order geared to development, peace and understanding must also include recognition of the principle of sovereign equality. Both drafts underlined the growing role of the mass media in further improving international relations.

21. The year 1987 had seen promising developments in arms limitation, disarmament and international security. The World Disarmament Campaign and the clear-cut DPI mandate in that regard were therefore highly topical. A number of delegations, including his own, had spoken out in favour of rendering that mandate more specific. His delegation would have preferred if paragraph 1 (8) (f) of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 had contained the following specific goal: "... informing, educating and generating public support for the objectives of the United Nations in the field of arms limitation and disarmament", while emphasizing "the principle of conducting the campaign on a universal basis". In that way the Committee would have met the challenges posed by information more adequately and would have considerably strengthened the resolution on the World Disarmament Campaign initiated by members of all groups of States in the First Committee a few days previously.

22. Mr. JANUS (Netherlands) said that his delegation would vote against draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 in order to express its displeasure that the lengthy and promising negotiations which had produced the agreed paragraphs contained in annex VII to the report of the Committee on Information (A/43/21) had been completely ignored. As to the content of the draft resolution, his delegation was disturbed by the refusal to specifically exclude restrictions on the free flow of information or on freedom of the press from the definition of the new world information and communication order in paragraph 1 (1) thus implying that in the view of some it might actually involve such restrictions. The Netherlands also objected to the notion that the principle of sovereign equality extended also to the field of information, since that could be construed as a pretext for Governments to restrict freedom of information. It was troubled by the suppression of references to the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information, which had been included in the previous year's resolution. It did not believe that DPI should monitor meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement, as stipulated in paragraph 1 (8) (b), since DPI should confine itself to providing information on the work of the United Nations, or that it was DPI's task to organize seminars, as stipulated in paragraph 1 (9) (g); it also objected to the selective choice of political issues for DPI attention in paragraph (8) (g). It further disagreed that action should be stopped, as stipulated in paragraph 1 (10),

(Mr. Janus, Netherlands)

on the proposed elimination of certain DPI programmes and it missed in the draft resolution any expression of support for the ongoing DPI restructuring and any mention of monitoring and evaluating DPI's work. Paragraph 1 (15) of the draft implied that the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts applied specifically and separately to DPI, but the Netherlands believed it was a goal for the Secretariat as a whole rather than for individual departments.

23. The Netherlands would abstain in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.13 because it considered it unnecessary in view of the existing consensus in UNESCO regarding its work in the field of information. It also objected to references to documents and declarations adopted at certain regional conferences and containing appeals with which the Netherlands could not associate itself, and it had reservations on the inclusion of paragraph 6 and the wording of paragraphs 3 and 9.

24. Mr. BOUTSKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that his delegation would vote in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12. It was, however, disappointed that the draft's preparation had not taken on a universal character, which was essential for any document if it was to reflect the positions of the various regions represented in the General Assembly. He was referring above all to the broad distribution of information within the framework of the World Disarmament Campaign with a view to informing and educating public opinion on the disarmament tasks of the United Nations. A number of important questions were not reflected in the draft resolution, including the education of peoples in the spirit of peace and the important role of the mass media in improving international relations, particularly in promoting peace and international co-operation.

25. Serious and urgent problems still remained in connection with the international exchange of information. If progress was to be made, delegates must learn to bring forward their points of view while remaining receptive to other opinions. The restructuring of the exchange of information must make it possible to attain international understanding, co-operation and progress and to eliminate the nuclear threat.

26. It was to be hoped that the time available before the beginning of the eleventh session of the Committee on Information would be used to make that session a true turning-point.

27. Mr. ERATH (Federal Republic of Germany), expressing his disappointment over the failure to reach consensus, especially since it had seemed to be so close and all regional groups had shown a new willingness to compromise, said that his delegation would vote against draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 primarily because it was a significant step backwards from the previous year's resolution and from the proposed draft recommendations contained in annex VII of the report of the Committee on Information.

28. Mr. SOLANO (Spain) said that his delegation would abstain in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 because it was less satisfactory than the resolution adopted the previous year: paragraph 1 (2) (b) emphasized certain areas for

(Mr. Solano, Spain)

DPI action but ignored other very important ones such as economic and social development or human rights in general, which would have merited a separate paragraph. The draft resolution's treatment of the DPI restructuring and reform was also most inadequate. Furthermore, paragraph 1 (3) made no reference to the elimination of internal and external obstacles to the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information, and the definition in paragraph 1 (1) of the new world information and communication order was not in line with the consensus wording adopted by UNESCO at its 1985 General Conference, which had defined the new order as an evolving and continuous process. After the discussions in both the Committee on Information and the Special Political Committee, the draft resolution was a disappointment, because a particularly serious effort had been made to achieve a text acceptable to all and agreement could have been reached but for the intransigence of some delegations. The opportunity to enter on a new stage in which all would work together on questions such as the new world information and communication order had been lost.

29. His delegation would vote in favour of resolution A/SPC/43/L.13.

30. Mr. SMITH (United Kingdom) said that his delegation was dismayed to find itself voting on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12, which had been submitted by the Group of 77 quite simply as if the lengthy and promising negotiations between the spokesmen of the regional groups over the recent months had never taken place. The draft resolution put forward represented the initial position of the Group of 77, and it was incredible to hear it described as the result of concessions.

31. During the negotiations, the Group of Western European and other States had sought agreement on language to meet the widespread concern, even among many members of the Group of 77, about the impact of a so-called new world information and communication order on freedom of information and freedom of the press. The draft resolution, however, contained no assurance that any new order would not imply restrictions on press or individual freedoms: several references to a free flow of information had been suppressed, and, through the reference to the principle of sovereign equality, the draft would even have the Special Political Committee espouse language which was used in that context to justify State censorship. Evidently, for some of the Group of 77, the concept of a new order was indeed a way of restricting those freedoms to which the West attached such importance.

32. As for what the draft resolution said about DPI, the United Kingdom could not agree with the excessive number and the generally expansionist tone of the recommendations on the Department's work. It particularly opposed the selective introduction of sensitive and contentious political issues. It also opposed the deletion of language calling on DPI to carry out its activities in an objective, impartial, professional and effective manner and of paragraphs regarding the monitoring and evaluation of DPI's work. It could not accept the call for DPI to monitor meetings of the Non-Aligned Movement, for its role was to publicize the work of the United Nations; nor could it accept the apparent attempt in paragraph 1 (10) to encroach upon the Secretariat's discretion under the programme

(Mr. Smith, United Kingdom)

planning regulations to modify or terminate programmes. Lastly, the draft resolution would have the General Assembly take decisions upon matters relating to the structure of the Secretariat before the requisite decision had been taken by the Fifth Committee in that regard.

33. For all those reasons, his delegation would vote against draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12. It hoped that the following year a vote on that item would not be required.

34. Mr. SLABY (Czechoslovakia) said that draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 represented a regression in comparison to the more realistic basis for consensus offered by the proposals contained in annex VI of the report of the Committee on Information. The draft reflected the viewpoint of only one set of States and it was regrettable that there had not been more co-operation on their part. The result was a draft resolution without intrinsic force: there was no mention of the important role of the media in bringing about an improvement in international relations or peace, justice, equality, independence or human rights; nor did it appeal for a broad dissemination of information regarding United Nations objectives in the areas of arms limitation and disarmament.

35. Czechoslovakia would, however, vote in favour of the draft resolution because of its basic posture regarding the need for a new information and communication order.

36. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/SPC/43/L.25, outlining the financial implications of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12.

37. A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burma, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Yemen, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, German Democratic Republic, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: Belgium, Canada, Germany, Federal Republic of, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining: Australia, Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey.

38. Draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 was adopted by 100 votes to 8, with 15 abstentions.

39. A recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.13.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burma, Burundi, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Yemen, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, German Democratic Republic, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against: United States of America.

Abstaining: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Federal Republic of, Iceland, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

40. Draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.13 was adopted by 111 votes to 1, with 11 abstentions.

41. Mr. POULSEN (Denmark), speaking in explanation of vote, said that his delegation had abstained in the vote because of a number of elements in the draft resolution which it could not fully endorse, in particular the position taken on a new world information and communication order in paragraph 1 (1). It was most regrettable that the text had not taken the intensive preparatory negotiations properly into consideration. It was essential in future for consensus to be restored if the Committee on Information was to fulfil its mandate.

(Mr. Poulsen, Denmark)

42. Denmark had abstained also in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.13, mainly because the text repeated the practice of recalling meetings and declarations containing contentious elements, especially the final document issued by the Second Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries held at Harare in June 1987, which had directed an appeal to the mass media based on the equation of racism with zionism.

43. Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria) said that his delegation had abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 because the streamlining of the text over that of previous year's resolution had resulted in omissions that made it imbalanced.

44. Austria had awaited with interest the outcome of the intensive consultations that had been held on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12. It was regrettable that consensus had once again eluded the Committee despite the best efforts of those involved and despite the fact that agreement had been very close. The inflexibility of some delegations was all the more regrettable because meaningful progress in the field of information, as in other fields, could only be achieved by compromise and not by majority votes.

45. Mr. BOREHAM (Australia) said that his delegation had abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12. In the past, Australia had supported consensus resolutions at UNESCO conferences on the question of a new world information and communication order. Although much of the substance in the draft resolution was acceptable to his country, he had been unable to support it because some of the language used could be interpreted as approving political censorship. Furthermore, there was insufficient reference to the need for a free flow of information, which was of prime importance to Australia.

46. Draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 had placed significantly less emphasis than the corresponding resolution adopted in 1987 on the need to maximize the efficiency of DPI operations. The draft resolution reiterated mandates without indicating priorities and intruded into issues of resource allocation where the Department's management should have some discretion in the interest of overall efficiency. His country had supported the efforts of the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information to restructure DPI in order to ensure more efficient programme delivery. Measures which enhanced the efficiency of the Department should be strengthened. He hoped that a greater effort would be made to reach consensus on that question at the next session of the Committee on Information so that his delegation could vote in favour of the many desirable principles set forth in the text.

47. Australia had also abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.13 because of the reference in the second preambular paragraph to provisions which it found unacceptable. That abstention, however, should not be taken as an indication of any lessening of Australian support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication. Australia maintained its high regard for IPDC activities, especially in the South Pacific.

48. Mr. McDONAGH (Ireland) said that, although his delegation had voted in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12, it felt that the text left room for improvement in several respects. Furthermore, Ireland's vote in favour should not be construed as implying an endorsement of the General Assembly resolutions referred to, which Ireland had not been able to support in the past. In that regard, he accepted the assurances of the sponsors of the draft resolution and of other interested delegations that the search for consensus on the important issues under consideration would be continued in 1989.

49. The most important issue was that of the imbalances in the field of information and communications. The central question was whether information should be regarded as a commodity or whether the information and communication policy of each country had broader relevance. Ireland supported the role of DPI in promoting greater awareness of the activities and purposes of the United Nations. That was all the more important given the slow pace of international negotiations, the high technical level of much of the work undertaken by the Organization, and the geographical distances between States, which might lead to the false conclusion that what happened far away was not news. His delegation welcomed the reaffirmations in the draft resolution of the principle of freedom of the press. That freedom could also be threatened by commercial pressures. It was hoped that further consideration of that issue and its implications would bring closer together the positions of those delegations, on the one hand, which were concerned at the dangers of political control and, on the other hand, those which were alarmed at the distortions caused by disproportionate economic weight. Ireland, which supported the establishment of an international order responsive to values of justice and solidarity, hoped that a consensus could be achieved on the questions under consideration at the next session of the General Assembly.

50. Mr. KARINEN (Finland) said that his delegation had abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 because it was dissatisfied with the fact that the text had not been improved since the previous session of the General Assembly. It also regretted that some references to the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information had been deleted and that the definition of the concept of a new world information and communication order had remained unchanged. It was hoped that at its next session the Committee on Information could reach a consensus on that matter.

51. Although Finland had voted in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.13, it reiterated its reservations concerning paragraph 2. Furthermore, its vote should not be interpreted as approval of all the specific parts of the final documents of the Second Conference of the Ministers of Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Harare in June 1987, referred to in the second preambular paragraph.

52. Ms. MOSSBERG (Sweden) said that her delegation had abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 because it viewed the draft resolution as a step backwards which separated delegations even further than before. In 1989, it would be necessary for all concerned to show flexibility in order to reconcile the divergent views on those matters. Sweden's vote in favour of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.13 did not reflect any change in the position taken by its Government regarding the adoption of the various decisions referred to in the text.

53. Mr. ISHIDA (Japan) said that his delegation had voted against draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 and had abstained in the vote on draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.13 because both texts contained certain provisions which were not consistent with Japan's basic position on information and communication. While his delegation favoured effective and balanced DPI activities, it did not support those which would politicize issues or have financial implications that ran counter to the administrative and financial reform of the United Nations. Japan could not but express its deep disappointment over the failure to reach a consensus and the fact that the draft resolution had to be put to a vote. Nevertheless, the fact that a consensus had almost been achieved provided a ray of hope for the future. In spite of the difficult nature of the task, he sincerely hoped that a generally acceptable agreement would be reached as soon as possible.

54. Mr. MONTGOMERY (United States of America) said that his delegation had long supported efforts to accommodate diverse views and reach consensus on questions relating to information. At the same time, it recognized that there were great differences in media infrastructures among the countries of the world and agreed that those differences should be reduced. The United States Government and private organizations in his country supported practical programmes to increase the human and material resources of the media in developing countries.

55. The United States was willing to support realistic United Nations resolutions on that subject. Nevertheless it could not do so when the proposed texts included language that directly contradicted essential principles forming the very basis of its democracy. That pertained, above all, to freedom of opinion and expression, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in General Assembly resolution 59 (I), and the principle of freedom of the press. His country would not join in a consensus on a draft resolution containing language that could be used to justify restrictions on those freedoms. Draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 rejected the progress made in eliminating such unacceptable language and undid all the good work carried out by the regional spokesman. Accordingly, progress towards consensus at the next session of the Committee on Information would be problematic at best.

56. One of his delegation's principal objections to the draft resolution continued to be retention of the phrase "the principle of sovereign equality among nations extends also to this field", namely, the field of information. Although the United States upheld the principle of sovereign equality of nations, that principle, when used in the context of information, was cited as a justification to restrict the flow of information, thereby restricting the right of individuals to receive information without governmental manipulation and censorship. Continued insistence on the inclusion of that concept raised serious concerns about the professed adherence of some delegations to the principles of freedom of information and freedom of the press for all their citizens.

57. The Department of Public Information was not a political organization, a news agency or a propaganda unit. Its major responsibility was to provide objective coverage of United Nations activities and to inform the people of the world about the work of the Organization. In that regard, the resolution on information must

(Mr. Montgomery, United States)

provide a more balanced agenda for DPI. Its resources must not be monopolized by a few favorite causes to the exclusion of other equally worthy causes, such as important social, health, relief and humanitarian activities. The Department's agenda should reflect the priorities of all States Members of the United Nations. Moreover, DPI should be given more discretion in programming so that it could react to events as they occurred. The Department should be able to employ its knowledge and expertise to perform its proper functions with the necessary degree of flexibility.

58. His delegation was also concerned about efforts to distort the provisions of the Charter regarding the importance of recruiting staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. There was increasingly an attempt to elevate that objective, which was contrary to the Charter's language and intent, above the overall goal of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity of staff. It was unwise to try to achieve some artificial balance in every unit of the United Nations. Such geographical distribution should apply to the Secretariat as a whole. The restructuring of DPI should not be hampered by such efforts at micro-management.

59. His delegation was prepared to continue to participate in serious efforts to reach consensus at the next session of the Committee on Information. Nevertheless, it was becoming increasingly doubtful that consensus was possible. If meaningful progress could not be made in 1989, his delegation would probably be forced to conclude that agreement could simply not be reached on the issue. If such was the case, that sterile ideological debate should be put aside and attention should be focused on the task of monitoring and instructing DPI. If more thought was given to improving the media infrastructures in developing countries the current gap could doubtless be reduced. That might preclude fruitless debate and promote substantive progress in providing guidance to DPI in confronting its multiple challenges.

60. Mr. VERANNEMAN (Belgium) said that his delegation had very regretfully voted against draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12. In recent months a great effort had been made by many delegations belonging to the various regional groups to achieve a consensus. In such fields as that of information, only consensus resolutions made sense because they would be applied by all countries. Although most delegations had made concessions in order to reach a consensus, a small number of delegations had insisted on the inclusion of certain formulations which could be interpreted as justifying censorship and compromising freedom of the press, opinion and information. That was unacceptable to his delegation.

61. Draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 also contained certain elements which were more difficult for his delegation to accept than those in the corresponding resolution in 1987. Belgium had abstained in the vote on that resolution. Furthermore, his delegation did not understand why DPI should give particular attention to certain conflicts or problems to the exclusion of others and accord privileges to one particular group of countries, as was called for in paragraph 1 (8) (b) of draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12. Lastly, Belgium felt that the principle of equitable geographical distribution should apply to the Secretariat as a whole and not to specific departments.

62. Mr. WELL A MOUTE (Cameroon) said that, if his delegation had been present for the vote on draft resolutions A/SPC/43/L.12 and L.13, it would have voted in favour of them.

63. Mr. TEKAYA (Tunisia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, expressed warmest thanks to the delegations that had voted in favour of the two draft resolutions under consideration. He also noted with satisfaction the spirit of understanding and co-operation demonstrated by other delegations. The Group of 77 had taken into account the different positions of the various groups and countries concerned. Draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 included the relevant paragraphs of General Assembly resolution 59 (I) and also took into account article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Group of 77 had made a number of concessions, including the deletion from the previous year's text of a number of paragraphs about which some delegations had strong reservations.

64. It had been stated that draft resolution A/SPC/43/L.12 represented a step backwards in comparison to the previous year's text because it referred to certain specific United Nations activities. He felt that those activities were important to all countries because they reflected the purposes and principles of the Charter itself. It was gratifying to note that various delegations had expressed the desire to reach consensus. The Group of 77 had worked very hard to achieve that goal provided that such work had been in accordance with its principles and interests. The Group, which was always open to dialogue and constructive proposals, had agreed to continue negotiations during the current session of the General Assembly. It had proposed various alternative formulations in order to accommodate the positions of its partners, particularly the Western States. Its proposals, however, had not been accepted.

65. Progress had been made on minor issues. Obstacles remained with regard to the definition of a new world information and communication order and other principles to which the developing countries were very attached. Although all the members of the Group of 77 had tried to reduce the obstacles to reaching consensus, it could not accept changing the concept of a new world information and communication order. An important step had been taken by identifying the areas of major difficulty. The Group of 77 would continue to co-operate in order to reach a meaningful consensus in 1989.

66. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to paragraph 18 of the report of the Committee on Information (A/43/21), in which that Committee, supporting the requests of Hungary, Zimbabwe and Ireland for membership in the Committee on Information decided to submit the candidacies to the General Assembly for approval. If he heard no objection he would take it that the Special Political Committee agreed to recommend those candidacies to the General Assembly for approval.

67. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.