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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
10th meeting
held on
Monday, 24 October 1983
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RODRIGUEZ-MEDINA (Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 11 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 72: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (A/SPC/38/L.3 and L.5;
A/AC.198/62)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2);
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/38/387 and Add.1);
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (A/38/457)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the following documents on the item: the report of the Committee on Information (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2), the report of the Secretary-General (A/38/387 and Add.1), the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/38/457), a note by the Secretary-General on the acquisition by the United Nations of its own communications satellite (A/SPC/38/L.3), a draft resolution submitted by Mexico on behalf of the Group of 77 (A/SPC/38/L.5) and a report by the Secretary-General on the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division of the Department of Public Information (A/AC.198/62). A report on the round table on a new world information and communication order, organized jointly by the United Nations and UNESCO in Innsbruck, Austria, from 14 to 19 September 1983 (A/AC.198/70) would shortly be submitted to the Committee.

2. Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information), introducing the item, said that full-scale debate in the General Assembly on the philosophical and political issues relating to information was of relatively recent origin, commencing with the allocation of the information item to the Special Political Committee in 1978 and the consequent establishment of the committee that preceded the Committee on Information. The information function had always formed a major part of the activities of the United Nations Secretariat, as had been clear from the work of the Preparatory Commission at San Francisco in 1945 and the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 13 (I). However, the importance of information and communication, more precisely the power of the information media in an age of revolutionary changes in communications technology, had recently acquired world-wide recognition.

3. While the phenomenal improvements in communications should naturally simplify the task of those entrusted with the job of providing information, the years since the founding of the United Nations had also witnessed the multiplication of the membership of the international community. The world was a smaller place but it was also much more complex. The role of the United Nations in fostering international co-operation for peace and security and the well-being of future generations had, to that extent, been rendered more complicated and arduous.

4. Against that background, the task of the Department of Public Information (DPI) had greatly widened in scope and increased in complexity. Additional challenges had been posed by the trends of recent origin which the Secretary-General had clearly underlined in his report on the work of the

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Organization (A/38/1). Those included the perceptible weakening of the incentive to develop international institutions corresponding to the realities and risks of the age. Encouragement could, however, still be drawn from the fact that a basic faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter remained a dominant theme in Member States. That faith had been emphatically underlined in repeated statements at the highest level from all corners of the globe at the recently concluded general debate in plenary.

5. The crucial role for DPI lay in its efforts to widen the base for public support and understanding for the Organization in the international community. The Department's first priority should be to ensure that it worked closely with Member States to achieve the shared objectives of international co-operation for peace and security and for economic and social development. As technology in the field of communications had developed at an unprecedented pace, so had the importance of information as a vital instrument for establishing an international structure for peace and security and as a vehicle for international co-operation for development.

6. In seeking to widen the base of public support for the objectives of the Organization, the Department must focus on the principal disseminators of information, especially the mass-media organizations. Non-governmental organizations and educational institutions must also play an appropriate central role.

7. The priority tasks which the Department had been called upon to undertake by the General Assembly and other intergovernmental organs continued to expand at a rapid rate. A quick glance at the promotional and publicity tasks in connection with the number of major international conferences as well as commemorative years, weeks and days devoted to particular causes, could provide a good measure of the vastly expanded responsibilities which had been entrusted to DPI. As those responsibilities had expanded, however, the human and material resources made available had not kept pace. While every effort continued to be made to increase efficiency through improvements in methods of work and redeployment of resources, the limited resources at the Department's disposal could not be expected to meet adequately all the new demands placed on them.

8. He could say with considerable satisfaction that the Department had succeeded in keeping the growth in its programme budget to the minimum; he intended to continue to stress the need for greater economy and efficiency. Continuing emphasis on strengthening internal evaluation procedures added to the Department's ability to exercise maximum restraint over expenditures. However, when the General Assembly took specific steps that necessitated a net addition to the Department's activities, a commensurate allocation of resources could be ignored only at the risk of a breakdown in operations or a serious lowering of quality.

9. Among the issues most keenly argued at the latest substantive session of the Committee on Information had been those concerning the resources to be placed at the disposal of DPI for the performance of the tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly. Despite initial differences, the Committee, following intense negotiations, had been able to reach broad agreement on 62 recommendations adopted

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by consensus (A/38/21, para. 94). Three recommendations had been adopted pending examination of their financial implications and it was his understanding that they were already the subject of negotiations in the Working Group. He would welcome a detailed examination of the recommendations by the Special Political Committee.

10. Of particular significance to the work of DPI were the recommendations concerning the enhancement of the role of the United Nations information centres and the recognition of their intrinsic functions as distinct from those entrusted with United Nations operational activities for development. The other specific measures recommended by the Committee regarding the work of information centres should also help to improve their effectiveness. In his report on the work of the Organization (A/38/1), the Secretary-General had stressed the need to improve the fact-finding capacity of the Secretariat in potential conflict areas. Steps had already been initiated to that end. As the Department's contribution to that process, United Nations information centres, as branch offices in the field, were also being asked to make an appropriate contribution to strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat in assisting the Secretary-General to perform his role in preventive diplomacy.

11. The importance of the functions of the United Nations information centres was coming to be more widely appreciated, as was manifest in the interest shown by a number of Member States in the establishment of new centres. While the Department endeavoured to meet such new demands as far as possible through redeployment, there were inevitably certain limits to the use of that device. He therefore urged the Committee to view with an appropriate sense of realism questions concerning such additional responsibilities for DPI in the light of the availability of resources.

12. As part of the Department's efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness, it had been decided to relocate Development Forum in New York. He was gratified that the Committee on Information had recommended that the Secretary-General should be requested to ensure that Development Forum would retain its editorial policy of intellectual independence, enabling it to continue to serve as a forum in which diverse opinion on issues related to economic and social development could be expressed freely. Development Forum must strive henceforth to be in the forefront of the development dialogue and to provide a stimulus for wide-ranging debate on fundamental issues facing the international community.

13. The Department did not ask for unquestioning acceptance by the mass media but it certainly needed a real, informed public understanding of the issues at stake and the efforts of the Organization to confront them. Consequently, in the attempt to promote constructive dialogue with the media, DPI had organized several round tables with world mass-media leaders; four had been held in three different regions of the world during the past year. The Department had again held the annual editors' round table, which was a particularly successful example of the Department's objective of bringing representatives of leading print and audio-visual media to the United Nations to meet senior officials and to gain a first hand knowledge of the Organization's activities.

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14. Pursuant to a specific request from the Committee on Information, a round table on a new world information and communication order, with the wide participation of major news-media editors and with representation from all regions, had been held from 14 to 19 September 1983 in Innsbruck, Austria (A/AC.198/70). A fruitful discussion had taken place, and it had reflected a rich diversity of ideas as well as a good measure of consensus on the major issues considered.

15. The establishment of the Committee on Information had added a new dimension to the responsibilities of DPI, not least in that DPI provided the secretariat of the Committee. DPI had also to respond to a much expanded volume of reports on information issues requested by the General Assembly and the Committee on Information. The experience had been beneficial, in that the Department had been able to develop a more acute understanding of the preoccupations, priorities and concerns of member Governments. The Committee on Information had provided DPI with an opportunity for an intensive dialogue with Member States on all matters relating to information, enabling the Department to gauge the adequacy and relevance of its activities and to seek guidance with respect to the overall political framework within which it worked. Such guidance was very helpful while it in no way diminished the administrative and operational responsibility of the Secretariat as defined by the Charter.

16. All the members of the Department were fully aware of the challenges facing the Organization and would do their utmost to meet them. If the trend towards erosion of multilateralism and internationalism was to be arrested and reversed, as the Secretary-General had urged, the Organization's information activities must help to create a climate of opinion in which Governments had no hesitation in choosing the policy and course of action that most closely corresponded to the principles of the Charter and, indeed, to their own long-term interests.

17. Mr. MORENO-SALCEDO (Philippines), speaking as Chairman of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of the Committee (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2) on its substantive session held from 20 June to 8 July 1983. During the Committee's session, 62 action-oriented recommendations had been adopted by consensus (A/38/21, para. 94). That achievement was itself noteworthy, considering the great divergence of views on some key issues. The attainment of consensus was a tribute to the spirit of accommodation among the members of the Committee.

18. The Committee's accomplishments corresponded to three broad areas related to its mandate. First, its recommendations had focused on determined efforts to promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order. Second, a comprehensive evaluation and follow-up had been undertaken by the Committee on the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communication, especially in the critical role of shaping more favourable public perceptions of the United Nations. Third, various proposals had been made on how to enhance the activities of DPI so that it could cope with its tasks.

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19. The Committee had stressed the need for all countries, the United Nations system as a whole, and all others concerned, to collaborate in the establishment of a new world information and communication order. The Committee had appealed to the international media to support the efforts of the international community towards global development and, in particular, the efforts of the developing countries for their own economic, social and cultural progress. The Committee had recognized the central role of UNESCO in the field of information and communication and had recommended that co-operation between the United Nations and UNESCO should take more regular forms, especially at the working level, through which the contribution of DPI to the efforts of UNESCO could be maximized. The Innsbruck round table had been organized in co-operation with UNESCO and had provided a unique opportunity for its participants and observers to elucidate the philosophical foundations of the practical needs of the new world information and communication order.

20. The Committee had also reviewed the continuing activity of DPI in training broadcasters and journalists, particularly those from the third world. The Committee had considered the Department's catalytic role of producing information materials on the United Nations.

21. The Committee had recommended specific steps to achieve the objectives of the new world information and communication order, emphasizing the need for support by the whole United Nations system and the developed countries for the International Programme for the Development of Communication. Such support should strengthen the information and communication infrastructures of the developing countries. In that connection, the Committee had recommended assistance to developing countries by the United Nations system, particularly UNESCO, in establishing telecommunication links at subregional, regional and inter-regional levels. Such assistance should include the granting of favourable conditions for access to communications technology, as well as programme material for radio and television broadcasting.

22. Two specific information and communication projects of developing countries related to the support recommended by the Committee, namely, the international data bank for the non-aligned countries and the multi-sectoral information network of the Group of 77. UNESCO had prepared the feasibility study for the former in 1982 and the project had been partially implemented. UNDP had extended assistance to the developing countries on the second project through its information referral system. Continued co-operation in those two areas would help to meet the Committee's recommendations to assist developing countries.

23. Information and communication efforts were mainly directed at achieving a more comprehensive and realistic image of the activities and potential of the United Nations system. In particular, stress was laid on the primary role of the United Nations to maintain peace and promote international understanding among all nations. The Committee had recommended that those activities should also promote the operational and development activities of the United Nations, particularly, the improvement of living conditions in the developing countries.

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24. The Committee had acutely felt the need to rectify the highly distorted image of the United Nations as an expensive and totally inefficient international institution for resolving conflicts and promoting socio-economic development. The recent report of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) (A/AC.198/68) on public perceptions of the United Nations system had confirmed the erosion of the credibility of the United Nations and its capacity to undertake its internationally agreed tasks under the Charter. The Committee on Information appreciated the findings on the inadequacies of public information activities as a factor contributing to the credibility gap and agreed that the recommendations of the JUNIC report should be implemented and that an appeal should be addressed to Governments and the mass media to transmit accurate information on major United Nations activities, especially those listed in Article 1 of the Charter.

25. The report of the Committee on Information had also made specific recommendations aimed at maximizing the resources of the United Nations information centres throughout the world, including: better staff training; continued review of possibilities for decentralization; improved feedback and reporting; appointment of the best qualified, experienced professionals from all regions as centre directors; and strengthening the centres and improving their services within the Department's existing resources.

26. The report encouraged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to develop a system for monitoring and evaluating DPI activities in the priority areas determined by the General Assembly. Recommendations had also been made with respect to the question of equitable geographical distribution of DPI staff, the opening of a United Nations information centre in Managua, the World Disarmament Campaign and the work of the JUNIC.

27. The report also contained recommendations which had been adopted but must await a decision by the General Assembly on implementation pending statements of financial implications. During the Committee's session the United States delegation and others could not agree to those recommendations, pending certification from the Secretary-General that they could be implemented within existing resources. Those recommendations were: the introduction of full programming by the Caribbean Unit in the Radio Service in French/Creole and limited programming in Dutch/Papiamentu; the production of regional television news magazines for national broadcasting organizations; and the prompt re-opening of the information centre in Jakarta.

28. Other recommendations on which no agreement could be reached included alternative approaches to the evaluation of DPI activities by the Joint Inspection Unit; exchange of information between the Committee and the Commission on Transnational Corporations; coverage by DPI of policies and practices affecting the human rights of populations in the occupied Arab territories; and proposals that the General Assembly should recognize the importance of the International Convention concerning the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace, and that the importance of General Assembly resolution 37/92 entitled "Principles Governing the Use by States of Artificial Earth Satellites for International Direct Television Broadcasting" should be emphasized.

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29. The work of the United Nations and of organizations such as UNESCO and ITU in promoting a new world information and communication order would continue to have its share of problems. That was understandable, because the most difficult part of the mandate of DPI had to do not only with bridging the economic and technological gap that separated developed and developing nations but also with changing human values and attitudes. Those were awesome tasks which would test to the limit the Department's capacity for tolerance and justice, its vision and wisdom.

30. It was his earnest hope that a draft resolution concerning the significant accomplishments of the Committee on Information would be adopted by consensus.

31. Mr. KANDIL (Director, Division of Free Flow of Information and Communication Policies, UNESCO) said that the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/38/457) had been prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/94 A. The resolution invited the Director-General to submit to the General Assembly a comprehensive report on the implementation of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), on the activities related to the establishment of a new world information and communication order, and on the impact of the current technological developments and practices and their application in the information and communication sector, especially in the developing countries.

32. Pursuant to that resolution, the third subject, communication technologies, appeared for the first time in the UNESCO reports. Adding that subject was only logical: the impact of technological developments and practices in the communication sector in both developing and developed countries was directly related to the other two subjects of the report. Some even said that a new world information and communication order was already being established through the current technological revolution, which was likely to gain further momentum in the coming years.

33. Communication technology involved two distinct groups of problems: that relating to the media, focusing on the collection, flow and distribution of news among the general public, and that relating to specialized information, particularly in science and technology, centred on the collection, processing and dissemination of factual, numerical and bibliographical data for the use of specialists and policy makers. The two sets of problems were clearly connected. However, the former had been much debated by politicians, journalists, researchers and the public; while the latter had been thought of by many, perhaps because of ignorance of today's computerized communication, as a sacred domain of a small, élite that specialized in communication technologies.

34. The problem was not only technical. Those technologies were playing a role in transforming societies and causing them to move toward ever great complexity. Communication and information had become major economic forces both at national and international levels. They were becoming the key activity in the most highly industrialized countries, where already more than half the working population was directly or indirectly engaged in producing, processing and distributing information.

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35. However, the situation was by no means the same in all countries. The UNESCO medium-term plan for 1984-1989 indicated that the industrialized countries enjoyed a de facto monopoly in the field of information, affecting both the substance of knowledge and the technical means of circulating it; as a result, the transfer of information technologies and of information itself to developing countries might be hindered by restrictive practices, but it might also make those countries dependent on the privileged suppliers. As stated in the UNESCO plan, the developing countries were not the only ones affected by restrictive practices inhibiting the free flow of information: such practices were also found in relations between industrialized countries and within individual countries.

36. That question had been raised by the experts who had participated in the Innsbruck Round Table. Fears had been expressed that small countries were often overwhelmed by large countries, and the less industrially advanced by the more industrially advanced. Large data bases for information networks were located in a few countries and remote sensing was the privilege of the rich according to the report of the round table (A/AC.198/70). The report went on to state that the promise of using that technology to allow developing countries to exchange information among themselves and between them and the rest of the world had not materialized. The flood of one way information had continued and might have increased.

37. A study on the international circulation of television programmes and televised news carried out by UNESCO and major research institutions all over the world (A/38/457, annex, para. 27) confirmed in its provisional conclusions that no major changes in the international flow of that material had taken place since 1973.

38. The question was therefore not limited to infrastructures, but also covered dissemination. It was not limited to news and mass media, which had dominated the debate of the 1970s, but reflected a concern with a host of developments on the communication front: the marriage between computer communications and telecommunications, transborder data flows, the proliferation of data banks, information technology, direct broadcasting and remote-sensing satellites, the geostationary orbit and the allocation of the electro-magnetic spectrum. The question was not limited to the simplistic North-South or East-West equations. It lay within each group of countries and within individual countries.

39. A new world order was needed. Changes were needed not only in infrastructures or even in structures: they were also needed in attitudes. As indicated in the report of the Innsbruck Round Table (A/AC.198/70), they required more tolerance, humbleness and willingness to learn. The report also reflected a deep feeling that mankind was living in an increasingly interdependent world, as confirmed by the realities of the 1973 oil crisis and the current food crisis.

40. That increasing interdependence must now be demonstrated before a world information crisis occurred. The problem had been seen by the Innsbruck round table as a fundamental aspect of the efforts to promote a free flow and a wider and better-balanced dissemination of information within and among nations, as well as

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to establish a new world information and communication order that was more equitable and more effective.

41. The establishment within UNESCO of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) was a step in that direction. The report of the Director-General described, in paragraphs 2-6, the results of the fourth session of the IPDC Intergovernmental Council, held in Tashkent in September 1983, while the annex to that report dealt with the activities of the Council prior to that session (A/38/457, annex, para. 1).

42. However, three years after the birth of the Programme, there was no reason to believe that the disparities had diminished, either at the international or the national level. Any progress had been very slow and extremely modest. The representative of UNESCO had indicated at the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly that funds available to IPDC were far from sufficient. He found himself obliged to repeat that point. Although fresh funds exceeding \$2 million had been announced by Japan, the United States, France, the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany, in addition to a new contribution in kind by the USSR (A/38/457, annex, para. 6), the efforts of IPDC and the UNESCO regular programme for the development of communication were being frustrated by lack of funds. That could be attributed partly to the world economic situation.

43. It had therefore been difficult for local and bilateral efforts to fulfil their goals. Multilateral assistance, either through UNESCO or outside it, fell far below the expectations of developing countries. That was well reflected in a UNESCO document on impacts and difficulties for each programme of the Organization implemented between 1981 and 1983.

44. That document stated that, although UNESCO technical assistance had more than doubled in 1981-1983, development requests still far exceeded funds available: currently the ratio was 20:1. For both institution development and support for regional and national training programmes, the demands for assistance exceeded available funds in the proportion of 6:1.

45. With regard to telecommunication tariffs, the document indicated that there had been a reluctance on the part of telecommunication administrations, both governmental and private, in several Member States to apply reduced tariffs for news and programme exchanges. The problem was highlighted in the Director-General's report (paras. 28-33). It would continue to be discussed by the UNESCO working group on tariffs, set up in 1979. In addition, a series of regional meetings between telecommunications and information managers was planned for 1983 and 1984 (para. 33) in order to examine current anomalies in rates and to propose practical measures for their reduction for the transmission of news and television signals.

46. UNESCO had enjoyed the full collaboration of ITU and of the professional organizations. That collaboration had grown significantly in the past year. It was particularly gratifying that UNESCO had been able to make a modest contribution

(Mr. Kandil)

to the World Communications Year, for which ITU had been the lead agency. He expressed satisfaction at the establishment by ITU of its independent committee on communication development, without which the work of the UNESCO International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (MacBride Commission) and perhaps that of the Committee on Information would not have been complete.

47. He was confident that the work of ITU, particularly the work of its independent committee, would be invaluable in responding, together with UNESCO, to the General Assembly's request to study the multidisciplinary and multifaceted problem of communication technologies and their effects on societies. The Director-General suggested (A/38/457, annex, para. 45) that UNESCO, in co-operation with ITU, could submit periodic reports on that matter to the General Assembly at future sessions if the Assembly so decided. UNESCO would be in a better position to assess the situation following the symposium on communication technologies to be held in Rome in December 1983 (*ibid.*, para. 44). Organized in collaboration with the Istituto dell' Enciclopedia Italiana, it would involve some 40 individual participants and an equal number of professional organizations, as well as representatives of leading enterprises in the communication industry. The aim of the symposium would be to identify priority research areas, both for UNESCO and for other international, regional and national institutions.

48. The UNESCO research development programme for 1984-1985 would be shaped accordingly. The draft programme and budget for that period would be discussed at the twenty-second session of the General Conference. It was fortunate that the Special Political Committee's debate of questions relating to information, which had assumed increasing importance, preceded the General Conference's debate of two major programmes on communication in the service of man and on information systems and access to knowledge, respectively, which would take place in November.

49. He expressed the hope that a fresh start could now be made in a spirit of conciliation towards establishing a new world information and communication order.

50. The CHAIRMAN said that he would request the Secretariat to have the three preceding statements reproduced as fully as possible in the summary record.

51. Mr. ELIOPOULOS (Greece), speaking on behalf of the ten member States of the European Economic Community, said that the Committee on Information should exercise its right to review the performance of DPI and to make recommendations.

52. The Committee on Information must act with maximum responsibility in making new proposals and indicating the relative priority to be accorded. The Ten were ready in principle to support the Secretary-General's appeal in the Fifth Committee for a moratorium on organizational changes during the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly. The Community looked forward to reports by the Secretary-General on the programme implications of the recommendations of the Committee on Information, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/234. The Secretariat should put forward its own ideas on programmes which were becoming obsolete or were of a lesser priority so that savings could be made.

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(Mr. Eliopoulos, Greece)

53. The Ten took note of the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report on the in-depth evaluation of the work of DPI (E/AC.51/1983/7) and called upon DPI to pay further attention to the need for good management. The efforts undertaken in that field by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information were commendable. The evaluation of DPI activities with regard to effectiveness, cost, accountability and the identification of target audiences should be intensified and the results should be followed up. Furthermore, the Joint Inspection Unit could be requested to evaluate DPI activities over a period of several years.

54. DPI should always strive for the highest quality in its production and maintain standards of impartiality, reflecting differences of opinion. It was gratifying to note the Department's efforts to promote economic and cultural development, especially of the developing countries. The use of journalistic techniques, in newspapers, films, radio and television broadcasts should be encouraged to promote the still-too-limited dialogue between peoples of developed and developing countries and among developing countries themselves.

55. The Ten recognized that one of the main priorities of DPI was to help the public understand that the United Nations was the primary instrument for seeking solutions to international disputes and encouraging development. Nevertheless, high priority should be given to social and economic information in order to improve the public image of the United Nations system. That image was essential for the popular support on which the Organization depended in order to pursue its goals. A considerable part of the United Nations information effort, therefore, should be directed at audiences in potential donor countries.

56. The Ten reaffirmed their commitment to a more just and more effective world information and communication order, which should emerge through an evolutionary process. It was essentially a developmental problem. Since UNESCO had the primary role in deliberations on a new world information and communication order, the European Economic Community looked forward to the results of the twenty-second session of its General Conference, currently in progress. The round table held in September in Innsbruck had laid the groundwork for a constructive discussion in the General Conference.

57. Progress, however, could be made only on the basis of a common commitment to the fundamental principles regarding freedom of information, and to the free flow and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information, guaranteeing the diversity of information sources and free access to information. The Ten were ready to play their part in changing the dependent status of the developing countries in the field of information and communication. The evolution of a new world order must be geared to the needs and wishes of individual countries. A free flow of information on a world-wide basis could make an important contribution to the promotion of international understanding. The existing imbalances in international communication resources must be overcome in order to improve international information flows. The lowering of those barriers required the fullest possible collaboration of all concerned.

(Mr. Eliopoulos, Greece)

58. In the search for a new information and communication order, full account should be taken of the realities of the changing world. Facts, ideas and opinions everywhere should be reflected by the mass media in a more balanced manner. The Ten favoured continuing co-ordination between UNESCO and other organs of the United Nations system in the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

59. The establishment of IPDC under the auspices of UNESCO should encourage a wide range of projects designed to improve communication capabilities. Successful implementation of the initial projects of IPDC should provide a firm foundation for its future work. The Ten strongly recommended continued publication of the Development Forum and called upon all the specialized agencies to contribute to its financing. That publication was very useful in providing ample coverage of social and economic affairs and related issues, particularly UNDP activities.

60. Freedom of thought and expression and the free flow of information and ideas were basic human rights. The best defence of those rights lay in a well-informed and critical world public opinion. At the same time, the right of every community to express and preserve its own character could not be ignored.

61. Among DPI activities, high priority must be given to promoting the understanding and implementation of human rights. The need for a common United Nations effort in the field of human rights was all too clear, in view of the frequent violation of those rights in various parts of the world. He stressed the paramount importance of freedom of the press, which was essential for all peoples. The Ten reiterated their position regarding the principles governing the protection of freedom of expression and information, contained in the declaration adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at its seventieth session, in April 1982.

62. The report of the Committee on Information was the result of hard work and willingness to compromise. The European Economic Community strongly urged that Committee to maintain the practice of working on the basis of consensus and to consider the practicality of projects which it requested DPI to undertake.

63. Mr. PALAZZO (Brazil) said that the 62 recommendations on which the Committee on Information had reached consensus dealt with areas of great importance and should be given a consistent follow-up. The Special Political Committee was faced with the task of reaching agreement on the recommendations which had been omitted from the consensus text. It was a lack of objectivity in the overall work of the Committee that had led to the current deadlock. Certain delegations wished to expand current services and work; others adamantly objected to those ideas; still others politicized certain issues unnecessarily.

64. He stressed the need for a compromise solution. Objectivity was essential: before requesting any action from DPI, delegations should determine which areas were beneficial to all and promoted the new information and communication order. Each proposal should be considered in the overall context of budgetary

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(Mr. Palazzo, Brazil)

constraints. Due consideration must be paid to the financial resources allocated for public information activities. Delegations should carefully consider their own requests before making them. It was necessary to streamline proposals and reach agreement on those which were strictly within the mandate and budgetary means of the Department. Furthermore, concentrating on truly relevant issues would be more effective and would better serve the image of the United Nations. His delegation agreed with the view that the role of DPI must be construed as supplementary to the efforts of national and other information agencies.

65. It was time to join in a common effort to promote the new information and communication order on the basis of freedom of information and by assuring free access to information sources and free flow of information in a balanced and objective manner. Meaningful steps should be taken to eliminate the dependence of developing countries in the field of information and communication and to strengthen their infrastructure. The new order must be based on full respect for the decisions of each State on internal policies regarding information.

66. The new order, as conceived by Brazil and other developing countries, should not be seen as a threat to freedom of information. On the contrary, the developed countries should adopt a more pragmatic approach and realize that the developing countries sought to strengthen their own infrastructure, obtain the much-needed transfer of technology and bring about a reciprocal flow of information between developing and developed countries. In short, the developing countries would like to participate on an equal footing in all information activities.

67. He stressed the importance of General Assembly resolution 37/92 containing the Principles Governing the Use by States of Artificial Earth Satellites for International Direct Television Broadcasting. In view of the overriding importance of that set of principles for all peoples, the prevailing resentment against the countries which had voted for the adoption of that resolution must be overcome. It was necessary to put aside feelings of mistrust and co-operate fully in the implementation of the principles.

68. Lastly, his delegation supported the proposals in paragraph 94, section C, of the report of the Committee on Information (A/38/21). Proposals Nos. 2, 3 and 4, in particular, should be given thorough consideration before any decision was taken.

69. Mr. GONZALEZ MANET (Cuba) said that the item under discussion was both a global problem and a foreign-policy question of the highest priority, since it involved issues relating to the transmission of information between computers, transborder data flows, data banks, the monopoly exercised in that sector by a small number of giant firms, the obvious differences between one powerful nation and the countries of Western Europe because of the incompatibility between the commercial so-called "free flow" of information and State-run telecommunication systems, and, above all, the vital need to establish the new world information order. Hitherto, international discussions had left out such important aspects as the over-concentration of the design, production and marketing of electronic components in the hands of an ever smaller number of transnational corporations.

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Very little had been said about the negative impact of technological changes on labour and social values, or about the fact that the so-called "computerization of society" was perceived by some countries as a means of retaining their supremacy.

70. Dr. Hideo Miyashita, Director of Research of the Nomura Research Institute of Tokyo, in a serious study of the computerized society, published in the Journal of Japanese Trade and Industry of 20 March 1982, had said that it was essential to recognize such a society's negative aspects of if its benefits were to be properly weighed. He averred that progress in information technology had been so rapid in his country that there had not been enough time to assess its consequences. Among other effects, he cited the following: (a) the control exercised by computers and data banks could cause irreversible damage to social values and cultural forms; (b) automation in computerized societies would have a profound effect on workers of all kinds; (c) problems of adjustment to those new ways of life would be felt well into the twenty-first century, creating an instability that would transform standards and traditions; (d) with the spread of data processing and telecommunication systems, social systems would be increasingly vulnerable through their dependence on a small number of companies and technocrats.

71. Dr. Herbert I. Schiller, a professor at the University of California and a pioneer in research into the causes and socio-political context of information technology, had been still more specific and critical. In an article entitled "Information: America's New Global Empire" in the September-October 1982 issue of Channels of Communication, published in New York, he had stated:

"Sophisticated information technologies, basically computers and satellites, provide American corporations with the constant flow of information they need to run efficiently. It is in this sense that John Eger, a Vice-President at CBS, has urged that America win 'the international information war', mainly through government support for the super-corporate combines who handle integrated systems with the help of cultural and information industries."

"Why are so many countries threatened by a doctrine that sounds like a noble corollary of political freedom? (That is, the rhetorical doctrine of 'free flow of information'.) There is a history of resentment behind it. The hostility engendered by this system gradually gave rise to demands for a new and more equitable information and economic order. But if the United States has its way, the new world context will be based on the very technologies whose explosive growth facilitated the rapid expansion of American business abroad, technologies created by a colossal expenditure on military research and instrumental in creating unequal economic relationships that poor countries seek to rectify."

72. November 1983 would mark the fifth anniversary of the UNESCO Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War. That anniversary was of the highest importance because of the dangerous increase in the

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use of the international mass media to foster tension and provoke confrontations which constituted a serious threat to world peace. However, the media had a vital function not dependent on commercial profit: that of mobilizing public opinion against war propaganda and the collective suicide into which certain countries were seeking to drag the world.

73. A number of important events relating to information had occurred in 1983. In its Political Declaration, the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries had stressed the continuity and historical importance of the struggle for the decolonization of information (A/38/132, paras. 22 and 173). The Latin American Agency for Special Information Services, which was regarded as the first specific step towards a new information order in the region and had the support of the United Nations, UNESCO, IPDC and the Latin American Economic System, had been officially established in Mexico City on 10 October, by nine signatory countries, including Cuba.

74. In addition, a fourth session had been held in Tashkent, USSR, of the IPDC Intergovernmental Council, a body which was steadily achieving recognition as an effective means of intergovernmental co-operation in promoting the new order to which the developing countries aspired, despite the pressure and deliberate abstention of certain Western countries which refused to contribute to the special fund operated by UNESCO. The round table recently held in Innsbruck, Austria, on a new world information and communication order, jointly organized by the United Nations and UNESCO (A/38/387, para. 4), had caused more publicity to be given to the views of the great Western consortia than to the priority objectives of the third world, in other words, the urgent need for telecommunication infrastructures organized within the framework of a strategy of social participation and development.

75. The new information order would be in the forefront at other important international meetings, such as the twenty-second session of the General Conference of UNESCO and the special conference of ministers of information of non-aligned countries, due to take place in Jakarta in January 1984.

76. Cuba had contributed as far as its very modest means allowed to the advancement of the new world information and communication order through the establishment in Havana a few days earlier of an International Institute of Journalism, in response to the mandate of the first meeting of the Intergovernmental Council for the Co-ordination of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries, held in Tunis in 1976, whose wide repercussions made it in every sense historic.

77. If all those events were not enough to make 1983 particularly important for the new world information and communication order - pushed to the sidelines as a theme of the 1983 World Communication Year - there were many negative signs that also made it significant. The United States Congress had enacted a law to monitor and control UNESCO's activities in the communications sector in accordance with that country's strategic interests. For the first time in the history of international relations, a law was directed against a body that represented

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160 sovereign countries in order to prevent agreements that were favourable to the new order or were harmful to the so-called "free flow of information". It was a direct expression of the free-market machinery of the transnational corporations, based on the suspension of contributions or withdrawal from UNESCO.

78. The world exhibition TELECOM 83 had recently been held in Geneva, sponsored by the major electronics and banking corporations, with a view to fostering a new information order very different from that sought by the developing countries. It would be based on integrated global telecommunications, vertically controlled by such centres of transnational corporate power as International Business Machines, American Telephone and Telegraph, Lockheed, Exxon and American Express. Its purposes - totally devoid of ethics - were to maximize the efficiency and profits of the giant corporations.

79. Almost simultaneously a second meeting had been held at Talloires, France, convened under United States auspices, at which the major information media and corporations of the Western world were represented. In its report, the meeting alleged that the new information order was illegal, stating that there was no national sovereignty over information. It was stressed that no government had the right to limit the free flow of information, the import of new telecommunication technologies or their utilization in its territory.

80. Yugoslavia had provided one of the best examples of rationality and defence of sovereignty in that field when it had imposed a moratorium between 1976 and 1978 on the import of microelectronic components from the large United States transnational corporations. That process of strengthening national development strategies had culminated in September 1981 in the approval by the Yugoslav parliament of one of the world's first laws on information technology.

81. At the first Talloires meeting, organized by the same interests, a statement had been issued on so-called "freedom of expression" which sought to impose a free-market régime on IPDC one month before it began its work. That document - which could be regarded as a corporate "Magna Carta" - had been adopted as a government position and given world-wide distribution by the United States.

82. In Tashkent, at the fourth session of the IPDC Intergovernmental Council, those same interests had displayed their intransigence in opposing a Mexican proposal for organizing a number of seminars, through the Latin American Federation of Journalists, to study the new world information and communication order in 18 Latin American countries. Nevertheless it had been agreed, with the support of the Latin American countries and the Group of 77, that that proposal would be included in the UNESCO programme budget for the next biennium.

83. All those developments highlighted the pressure being exerted against the decolonization of information and the establishment of the new information order. The poverty of the developing countries, and the humiliating disequilibrium whereby more than 100 nations had access to only 10 per cent of the mass media, less than 5 per cent of television stations and 2 per cent of telephones, was apparently not

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enough; it was not enough for a single country to control 75 per cent of the world's television programmes, 50 per cent of its cinema programmes, 62 per cent of the production and sale of computers and 89 per cent of the commercial information in data banks. The situation was even more disturbing if the central problem was considered not as a quantitative and purely technological but rather as a qualitative and political question affecting the future equilibrium between countries and international relations as a whole.

84. The reasons behind that dramatic state of affairs were made plain by the current issue of the United States magazine Business Week. In a long, highly revealing and clearly reliable article entitled "Telecommunications: The Global Battle", the publication asserted that sales of microelectronic equipment - not including services - would reach \$88 billion in the next five years and that telecommunications were today a vital strategic weapon of corporations in order to automate an increasing number of functions and compete more successfully in the world market. The article favoured privatizing public telecommunications services and drew attention to the growing pressure of the transnational corporations and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration of the United States Department of Commerce on the postal, telephone and telegraph authorities of Western Europe to lift their regulations and open their markets to United States corporations.

85. Business Week drew attention to the alarm produced among the large corporations by the decision of the Federal Republic of Germany to impose changes according to the volume of messages and data transmitted between computers via satellite after 1985. Their alarm was understandable considering that their operations were wholly dependent on the unrestricted flow of data across frontiers and that between 60 and 80 per cent of their income came from abroad, meaning that they needed and demanded free access at low cost. A single branch of the Bank of America, the largest financial group in the world, carried out about 1.5 billion transactions a year through private world-wide transmission networks.

86. Those who so desperately opposed the new world information and communication order and who sought to impose the so-called "free flow" on the rest of the world, including their own Western European allies, were using the new telecommunication technologies as a modern instrument of neo-colonialism to the advantage of monopoly power centres. Those technologies wiped out frontiers and made the cost of voice, image and data messages insignificant, regardless of length or distance. As well as facilitating the over-concentration of financial power and decision-making - together with operational decentralization on a world scale, with its consequent effect on workers and the international division of labour - they also constituted the very core of the new military systems. The protagonists of those changes and their main beneficiaries were the transnational corporations.

87. According to Mr. Karl Sauvart, a research worker at the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, computerized information via satellite was steadily becoming a key factor in the operations of the major corporations, which controlled that sector and directed international flows.

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88. The United States periodical Transnational Data Report of March 1983, in an article entitled "Trends Towards Privatization in the Communications World", had pointed out that the group of major firms counted on the powerful assistance of the United States Government to press the European postal and telegraph authorities not to oppose the "free flow" of international telecommunications. The detailed article had emphasized that the United States, as the centre of the transnational financial and economic system, was the main originator and driving force behind trends towards the privatization of social services throughout the world.

89. He requested that his statement should be reproduced in extenso in the summary record.

90. Mr. LINDAHL (United States of America) said that the special procedure whereby the Special Political Committee could have transcriptions of the debates of some of its meetings, or parts of them, was important and worthwhile in certain circumstances. Unfortunately, there was always the danger that the Committee would find itself in a position of having to decide, delegation by delegation, which statements were important. He agreed that the introductory statements by the representatives of the Secretary-General were of paramount importance and should receive in extenso treatment. His delegation would have serious difficulties, however, if the Committee had to decide on requests delegation by delegation.

91. He appealed to the Cuban delegation and others which might think of making similar requests to consider the budgetary implications and also the political problems that such requests would cause for the Committee. Restraint was undoubtedly called for. He asked the Cuban representative to withdraw his request for the time being and if he still felt that it was important, to renew it at the Committee's next meeting.

92. Mr. GONZALEZ MANET (Cuba) said that there were few forums where such important questions as the one before the Committee were discussed. Frequently, there were attempts to prevent such problems from coming to light and from reaching the peoples of the world. In the same way, great ignorance subsisted throughout the world about the newest information processes, because they were not publicized. He believed that the questions raised in his statement were of great relevance to the developing countries and also to those industrialized countries which were finding themselves in a difficult position because of market competition. Nevertheless, in a spirit of conciliation and in order to avoid situations of the kind referred to, he was ready to agree to the reproduction in extenso in the summary record of only those aspects of his statement dealing with informatics on technology.

93. Mr. LINDAHL (United States of America) suggested that the Committee should take a decision at its next meeting. That would give representatives time to consider the full implications.

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94. Ms. MAYER-SCHALBURG (Federal Republic of Germany) said that the spokesman for the European Economic Community (EEC) had not asked for in extenso coverage of his statement because of the difficulties that would be caused if all delegations requested the same treatment. She asked the Chairman to consult the Secretariat and find out what the financial implications would be if the 60 or so statements that could be expected were all covered in extenso. When those figures were available, the Ten would be able to decide whether or not they should ask for such coverage for the EEC statement.

95. Mr. KAZAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation gave thorough consideration to the financial implications of any draft resolution or decision to be taken. In accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, every attempt should be made to reduce the expenditure entailed by the work of committees, including the publication of documents. Nevertheless, there were questions which went beyond purely financial considerations. The United States proposal that the Committee should take a decision at its next meeting might become a precedent whereby the Committee would decide whose statement was important and whose was less important. That would be tantamount to calling into question the sovereignty of Member States.

96. In his delegation's opinion, the Committee should not question the right of any State to consider its statement important enough to be given in extenso coverage in the summary record. That would only lead to disagreement and be detrimental to the spirit of co-operation which had characterized the debate on the question of information. On the other hand, he shared the apprehension of the United States representative that the exercise of that right by each State would considerably increase expenditure incurred through the publication of the documents of the Committee. He therefore appealed to all delegations to exercise that right in a very restrained manner. In order to set a good example, his delegation would make no such request when it made its statement.

97. The CHAIRMAN said that he associated himself with the appeal made by the representative of the Soviet Union. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the proposal by the representative of Cuba for in extenso coverage of only those aspects of his statement dealing with information.

98. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.