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Agenda item 77

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Report of the Special Political Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Abduldayem M. MUBAREZ (Yemen)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The three subitems comprising item 77 (see para. 2 below) were included in the provisional agenda of the thirty-third session of the General Assembly as three separate items in accordance with General Assembly resolution 31/139 of 16 December 1976, decision 32/436 of 16 December 1977 and resolution 3535 (XXX) of 17 December 1975, respectively.

2. At its 4th plenary meeting, on 22 September 1978, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to group the three items together and to include them in its agenda under a single title, as follows:

"Questions relating to information:

- (a) Co-operation and assistance in the application and improvement of national information and mass communication systems for social progress and development;
- (b) Freedom of information:
  - (i) Draft Declaration on Freedom of Information;
  - (ii) Draft Convention on Freedom of Information;
- (c) United Nations public information policies and activities: report of the Secretary-General."

3. At its 5th plenary meeting, on 22 September 1978, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to allocate the item to the

Special Political Committee with the understanding that the exclusively administrative and financial aspects of subitem (c) would be allocated to the Fifth Committee.

4. The Special Political Committee examined the item at its 38th, 41st to 46th and 48th meetings, between 29 November and 8 December.

5. For the examination of the item the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting a report received from the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on the co-operation and assistance in the application and improvement of national information and mass communication systems (A/33/144);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on United Nations public information policies and activities (A/33/146);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General on freedom of information (A/33/240 and Corr.1);

(d) Letter dated 17 October 1978 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General transmitting a study entitled "The New World Order for Information" (A/SPC/33/L.5).

6. At the 38th meeting, on 29 November, the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO made an introductory statement (A/SPC/33/SR.38, paras. 1-5) in relation to the report prepared under subitem (a) (A/33/144).

7. At the 42nd meeting, on 5 December, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information introduced the report of the Secretary-General (A/SPC/33/SR.2-8) relating to subitem (c) (A/33/146).

## II. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS

8. In the course of its deliberations, the Special Political Committee considered three draft resolutions and a draft decision, as set forth below.

### A. Draft resolution A/SPC/33/L.21

9. At the 42nd meeting, on 5 December, the representative of the Philippines introduced a draft resolution (A/SPC/33/L.21) under subitem (a) on behalf of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Subsequently, Pakistan joined in sponsoring the draft resolution.

10. At the 46th meeting, on 7 December, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/SPC/33/L.21 by consensus (see para. 19 below, draft resolution A).

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B. Draft resolution A/SPC/33/L.22/Rev.1

11. At the 46th meeting, on 7 December, the representative of Tunisia introduced a draft resolution (A/SPC/33/L.22) on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations which are members of the Group of 77. At the same meeting, he orally revised the draft resolution by replacing, in operative paragraph 6, the word "Commends" by the phrase "Expresses its satisfaction to" and the words "thirty-fifth" by "thirty-fourth".

12. At the 48th meeting, on 8 December, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/SPC/33/L.22/Rev.1, as orally revised, by consensus (see para. 19 below, draft resolution B).

C. Draft resolution A/SPC/33/L.23/Rev.1

13. At the 46th meeting, on 7 December, the representative of Tunisia introduced a draft resolution (A/SPC/33/L.23) under subitem (c) on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations which are members of the Group of 77. At the same meeting, he submitted revisions to the eighth and ninth preambular paragraphs and operative paragraph 7 of the draft resolution (A/SPC/33/L.23/Rev.1).

14. At the 48th meeting, on 8 December, the representative of Tunisia proposed the insertion of "forty-one" in the blank space in operative paragraph 4.

15. At the same meeting, a statement on the administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution was read out by the Secretary of the Committee.

16. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/SPC/33/L.23/Rev.1, as orally revised, by consensus (see para. 19 below, draft resolution C).

D. Draft decision A/SPC/33/L.25

17. At the 48th meeting, on 8 December, the representative of Costa Rica introduced a draft decision (A/SPC/33/L.25) with regard to subitem (b).

18. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted the draft decision by consensus (see para. 20 below).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE

19. The Special Political Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

A

Co-operation and assistance in the application and improvement  
of national information and mass communication systems for  
social progress and development

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 1778 (XVII) of 7 December 1962 and convinced that the establishment and/or development of national information and mass communication systems will play an important role in the promotion of opportunities for the peoples of the developing nations to participate fully in national development and in the promotion of international co-operation, including the efforts to achieve the goals of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade and the establishment of the new international economic order,

Recalling its resolution 3148 (XXVIII) of 14 December 1973 and convinced that the establishment and/or the improvement of national information and mass communication systems will greatly help preserve and enhance the cultural values of a country and will be one of the most efficient methods for transmitting scientific and technological knowledge and the cultural values of a country,

Recalling its resolution 31/139 of 16 December 1976, in which, inter alia, it established the need to discuss this item and requested the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to continue and intensify its programme for the development of mass communication systems, especially for the benefit of developing countries,

Desirous that the benefits of co-operation and assistance in the application and the establishment and/or improvement of national information and mass communication systems for social progress and development be considered with a view to disseminating those benefits to all countries regardless of their stages of economic and social development,

Recognizing that the potential of the field of communications should be applicable to all developing countries so that it could be used appropriately to further enhance the economic and social progress of developing countries and to allow all developing countries to have equal access to communication technology and principles in order to develop and operate their own communication systems and policies and to have equal access to the channels of information,

Noting with appreciation the relevant decisions taken by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its twentieth session in the field of mass communications,

Taking into consideration the need for finding ways to improve existing channels of communication within the United Nations and between developing countries,

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Convinced that consideration of ways and means of achieving the application and improvement of national information and mass communication systems for social progress and development will pave the way for improved international co-operation in the field of mass communications,

1. Takes note with appreciation of the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, prepared in co-operation with the International Telecommunication Union; 1/

2. Invites the Secretary-General, in co-operation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other specialized agencies, as well as interested organizations, to carry out consultations on ways and means by which assistance for developing countries can be increased in the field of communication technology and systems for their social progress and economic development;

3. Requests the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, on the basis of the result of the consultations in paragraph 2 above, to draw up a model plan for co-operation and assistance in the application and improvement of national information and mass communication systems for social progress and development, including the elaboration of a proposal for institutional arrangements to systematize collaborative consultation on communication development activities, needs and plans;

4. Requests the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to submit a progress report, in pursuance of paragraph 3 above, to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session;

5. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-fourth session the item entitled "Co-operation and assistance in the application and improvement of national information and mass communication systems for social progress and development" and to consider it at that session as a matter of priority.

B

International relations in the sphere of  
information and mass communications

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 3535 (XXX) of 17 December 1975 and 31/139 of 16 December 1976 and other relevant resolutions on the question of information,

Recalling its resolutions 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI) of 1 May 1974 containing the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, 3281 (XXIX) of 12 December 1974 containing the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States and 3362 (S-VII) of 16 September 1975 on development and international economic co-operation,

Taking note of the decisions and recommendations on the question of

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1/ A/33/144, annex.

information made by the non-aligned countries at the Conference of Heads of State and Government at Colombo 2/ and the Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs at Belgrade 3/ and by the regional conferences on the same subject organized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,

Aware of the fundamental contribution that the information media can make to the establishment of the new international economic order and to the strengthening of peace and international understanding,

Taking note with satisfaction of the report submitted by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization 4/ and of that organization's contribution to international co-operation in the field of communications and information,

Recalling the relevant decisions on information and mass communications adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its nineteenth and twentieth sessions,

Recalling the Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,

Reaffirming the manifest need to change the dependent status of the developing countries in the sphere of information and communication,

Aware of the need to mobilize assistance and make maximum use of all avenues of co-operation for the development of communications and information systems in the developing countries,

Taking into account the widespread hopes that the United Nations and the specialized agencies, notably the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, will help to establish a new, more just and better balanced world information and communication order,

1. Affirms the need to establish a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order, intended to strengthen international peace and understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information;
2. Approves the efforts being made to establish this new world order, which should reflect in particular the concerns and legitimate aspirations of the developing countries and the views expressed at the twentieth session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;

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2/ A/31/197, annex IV, NAC/CONF.5/S/RES.16.

3/ A/33/206, annex I, paras. 163-173.

4/ A/33/144, annex.

3. Stresses the essential role of the United Nations system in the attainment of this objective;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to encourage, through the specialized agencies, especially the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, co-operation and assistance conducive to strengthening the information and communication systems of the developing countries;

5. Requests the specialized agencies to provide co-operation and assistance to the developing countries in order to help them to identify and eliminate obstacles to the establishment of greater reciprocity in the circulation of information and to define needs and objectives in the communications sector by drawing up action programmes and mobilizing the necessary resources to increase their ability to produce and disseminate information;

6. Expresses its satisfaction to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for his efforts in the sphere of information and communication and requests him to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session a report on the activities of that organization in the field of information and mass communications;

7. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-fourth session an item entitled "International relations in the sphere of information and mass communications".

C

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 3535 (XXX) of 17 December 1975 and the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly relating to the question of information,

Bearing in mind the report of the Secretary-General, dated 7 September 1978, on United Nations public information policies and activities, 5/

Conscious of the important role which the United Nations information services should play in better disseminating to world opinion the aims and achievements of the United Nations,

Recognizing to that end the valuable assistance which Member States, the specialized agencies and the non-governmental organizations concerned can give to the work of the United Nations information services,

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5/ A/33/146.

Convinced of the need to strengthen and co-ordinate the activities and programmes of the United Nations system in the field of information and mass communications,

Bearing in mind the need to have Member States participate more actively in framing United Nations policies and programmes in the field of information and mass communications,

Recognizing further the essential role of information in the implementation of international decisions concerning economic and social development, especially those concerning the establishment of the new international economic order,

Recognizing to that end the important role which can be played by the Centre for Economic and Social Information of the Office of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Considering the need to maintain a balance in the use of the official languages of the United Nations in information handled and disseminated by the information services of the Office of Public Information,

1. Takes note of the report submitted by the Secretary-General in pursuance of resolution 3535 (XXX) and observes with satisfaction the great interest taken by the Secretary-General in improving United Nations public information services;
2. Reaffirms the necessity to foster in world opinion better knowledge of the aims and achievements of the United Nations, including the principles and purposes of the new international economic order;
3. Requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to ensure the close collaboration of Member States, the specialized agencies, non-governmental organizations and other information bodies in framing United Nations public information policies and programmes;
4. Decides to establish a Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, consisting of forty-one Member States;
5. Requests the President of the General Assembly, having consulted the regional groups, to appoint the members of the Committee on the basis of equitable geographical distribution;
6. Requests the Committee to submit a report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session on the policies and activities of the public information services of the United Nations system, giving particular attention to activities in the economic and social sphere;
7. Requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to enable the Office of Public Information to maintain an adequate balance in the use of the official languages of the United Nations with, inter alia, an increase in the number of publications in the languages which such balance would require;



8. Requests the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session on developments in the activities of the public information services of the Secretariat;

9. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-fourth session the item entitled "United Nations public information policies and activities".

20. The Special Political Committee also recommends that, in view of the fact that agenda item 77 (b), entitled "Freedom of information", was not substantively considered at the current session and that no specific resolution pertaining thereto was introduced, the General Assembly should include in the provisional agenda of its thirty-fourth session an item entitled:

"Freedom of information:

"(a) Draft Declaration on Freedom of Information;

"(b) Draft Convention on Freedom of Information".

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