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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 42nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIZA ESCALANTE (Costa Rica)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 77: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/33/144, 146, 240, 278, 376; A/SPC/33/L.5; L.21)

- (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
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- (c) UNITED NATIONS PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that two meetings would be devoted to the general debate on item 77. He reminded members of the Committee that the list of speakers was closed and drew their attention to document A/SPC/33/L.21 which contained the text of a draft resolution on item 77 (a) sponsored by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. He also pointed out that the report of the Secretary-General had been distributed as document A/33/146.

2. Mr. AKATANI (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations public information policies and activities, said that it was the first time that the subject had come before the Special Political Committee. The report was submitted pursuant to a directive addressed to the Secretary-General by the General Assembly in 1975, requesting him to make new efforts to disseminate comprehensive information on the political, economic, social, cultural and humanitarian achievements and undertakings of the United Nations system, including the principles and aims of the new international economic order. He gave an account of the main current concerns of the Organization and related information activities, together with a brief description of existing co-ordination machinery and future trends in the face of the continuing erosion of the resources devoted to public information. Aware of the need to carry out its work in a creative manner, the Office of Public Information was constantly seeking to improve its services. It also took cognizance of the suggestions and recommendations made by the Consultative Panel on Public Information and the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, and had already taken certain initiatives in that connexion, including the preparation by a feature service of material in several languages on economic and social questions for publication in the third world, co-operation with the Pool of Non-Aligned Press Agencies, production of publications in additional languages, in some cases with financial assistance, in whole or in part, from local NGO's or other sources, research on less expensive and speedier publication methods, in order to stay within budgetary limits, and the use of electronic word processing equipment.

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3. With the proliferation of meetings both at Headquarters and abroad, and during major conferences and sessions of the General Assembly, there was a growing problem of staff to provide press coverage. That problem could be partially alleviated by including an information component in each conference budget so that additional staff could be made available on a temporary basis. Another remedy would be to fall back on the system of selective coverage, eliminating coverage of those meetings with little or no information value. However, the latter course of action had sensitive political ramifications which the Committee might wish to consider.

4. The world-wide network of United Nations information centres had grown in the past year with the establishment of new centres in Bahrain, Lesotho and Portugal. Another new centre was in the process of being established in Libya, which would bring the number of centres to 60 by the end of the current year, 20 in Africa, 16 in Asia, the Middle East and Oceania, 13 in Europe and 11 in the Americas. At the same time, OPI had established relations with other United Nations offices in the field, mostly those of UNDP resident representatives, which within limitations, were engaged in the distribution of its documentation to government agencies, the media, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations in countries where there was no United Nations Information Centre. That system was currently functioning in 55 countries. With regard to the strengthening of contacts between the centres and national non-governmental organizations, the meeting of Information Centre Directors held in Geneva in August 1978, with the participation of the Secretary-General of the World Federation of United Nations Associations, had made a positive contribution to that process.

5. In recent years, there had been a steadily increasing demand from the information media for instantaneous news material about events at the United Nations, particularly in the form of audio-visual documentation. The Radio and Visual Services Division was adjusting its priorities and redeploying its resources accordingly. The increased emphasis on news coverage rather than documentary material had led to closer co-operation between the Division and the world's major television networks and video syndicators. The Radio Service had been able to provide broadcasting organizations in Member States with an increased amount of news material of specific interest to them. There had also been an increase in the number of requests addressed to OPI by the General Assembly and other bodies, particularly for films and photographic exhibits in support of various United Nations causes.

6. With regard to paragraph 47 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/33/146), concerning radio broadcasts directed at South Africa, he pointed out that, at the current time, programmes produced by the Radio Service were beamed into southern Africa by 12 national broadcasting organizations at the rate of approximately six hours per day; eight additional broadcasting organizations used material prepared by OPI in their own programmes directed at southern Africa.

7. The report devoted much attention to the activities of the Centre for Economic and Social Information (CESI), which was entrusted with the task of co-ordinating

(Mr. Akatani)

all OPI's actions and activities in the field of economic and social information as a complement to its co-ordinating role as secretariat of the Joint United Nations Information Committee.

8. In conclusion, he referred to the statement made by the representative of Israel the previous Wednesday. The document referred to by that representative did not fall within the scope of normal OPI activities. It had been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977, concerning the question of Palestine, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to establish within the Secretariat a special unit on Palestinian rights which would prepare, under the guidance of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, studies and publications relating to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Secretary-General had complied with that request, as he was required to do under the provisions of Article 98 of the Charter, and he did not feel that it would be appropriate to reply to the various points raised by the representative of Israel in the context of agenda item 77.

9. Mr. VALDERRAMA (Philippines) recalled that the item entitled 'Co-operation and assistance in the application and improvement of national information and mass communication systems for social progress and development' had been placed on the agenda of the General Assembly in 1976 and that the Assembly, on the proposal of the members of ASEAN, comprising Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, had then adopted resolution 31/130, drawing attention to the need for the United Nations system to endeavour to promote co-operation and assistance for the establishment of development of national information and mass communication systems so that the benefits of mass communication technology should be enjoyed not only by a few nations but also by developing countries. The members of ASEAN had pointed out at that time that a number of basic questions should be considered: how to integrate communication technology and systems into a country's development plan, what the expected benefits were and what difficulties were involved in their implementation, and how to assess the measures necessary to overcome those obstacles and to evaluate progress. In addition, they had referred to the need to develop and improve channels in order to disseminate the benefits of mass communication. It was now regarded as appropriate to draw up a model plan for solving those problems without infringing the sovereignty of Member States.

10. It was important for developing countries to understand the nature of mass communication technology and the effects it could have on their societies. Member States should therefore develop and select programmes which were best suited to their needs. In turn, the United Nations and other international organizations should increase their assistance to developing countries in that area. It was with that in mind that the five delegations of the Association of South-East Asian Nations - Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand - were submitting, in the hope that the Committee would adopt it by consensus, the draft resolution contained in document A/SPC/33/L.21, all the preambular paragraphs of which were derived from resolution 31/139 of 16 December 1976.

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11. Mr. SURYOKUSUMO (Indonesia) said that document A/33/144 provided an excellent background for the Committee's work, in that it took stock of the work that had been done in the field of communications and raised a number of important questions. Chapter II, sections D, F, G, I, and J, and chapters III and IV of the report were particularly relevant to agenda item 77 (a). His delegation welcomed the adoption by consensus of the draft resolution inviting the Director-General of UNESCO to hold consultations with a view to providing more co-operation to the developing countries in that field and organizing an intergovernmental meeting to propose systematic machinery for the assessment of needs and the co-ordination on such co-operation.

12. His delegation also welcomed the adoption by consensus of another resolution authorizing the Director-General of UNESCO to take action to promote its policies, infrastructure and training activities in the field of communications and encourage better use of the media for social ends, including the convening of the intergovernmental conferences on communication policies. His delegation noted the will expressed by the industrialized countries during the twentieth session of the General Conference of UNESCO to increase their co-operation with developing countries in the field of communication. In order for the developing countries to receive the benefits of such co-operation, it was necessary to draw up a model plan that would be sufficiently flexible to take into account the different political, economic and social systems in each country. Accordingly, the United Nations system and other international organizations should adopt criteria to resolve the disparities and inequities between developed and developing countries in the field of mass communications and should take effective steps to ensure that all strata of society had access to that technology and scientific knowledge. They could also assist in the formulation of national policies and plans in the field of communications and the establishment of national, regional and international communication councils, and could formulate guidelines and objectives to assist the developing countries in implementing the principles of the new international economic order in the field of information.

13. The developing countries would also like the United Nations and other international organizations to assist them in training specialized personnel, especially in the areas of communication usage, university teaching and some sectors of production, and in establishing national research and documentation centres, international systems for the production and exchange of educational, scientific and cultural programmes and a training centre for television and radio personnel. The United Nations could intensify its research and evaluation activities and ensure dissemination of the results to developing countries.

14. The United Nations system and other international organizations might consider arranging a system which would enable developing countries to disseminate news nationally or to establish national or regional news agencies or consortiums; they might carry out a study on ways of improving exchanges of information among developing countries and on the preparation and distribution of cultural and scientific information material designed to give children and young people a better understanding of the political, economic and social realities of their countries.

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(Mr. Suryokusumo, Indonesia)

15. Those various activities could serve as a framework of reference for the elaboration of national, regional and international strategies with a view to setting up a common infrastructure which, while taking into account the interests of each country in the field of information, would enable developing countries generally to make progress in their over-all development.

16. In order to meet the needs of developing countries, a number of priorities should be established. The first was equitable access by all nations to communication technology, which was a prerequisite for the establishment of a new international economic order. It was equally important to guarantee the developing countries increased access to and participation in the communication media, which currently operated almost exclusively for the benefit of a small number of privileged countries, and to ensure that the existing inequity between the rural sectors in the field of information was reduced; it was essential to tackle those problems by offering effective solutions that might later be improved upon when developing countries were able to formulate and improve national communication policies.

17. A third priority was the development of mass communication systems to facilitate the formulation of over-all development plans integrating in a coherent whole the various factors of social change, among which communication was of prime importance.

18. Developing countries themselves needed to co-ordinate their information policies at the governmental, professional and academic levels and to make over-all national development the sole goal of those policies. They needed to encourage studies to determine needs, priorities and necessary revisions with regard to the transfer of technology. They needed to evaluate the influence of international communication factors on the cultural identity of the nation and to supervise their effects, while at the same time ensuring that their communication policies and information services were compatible with international agreements and with prevailing world levels of technology. Lastly, they must consider the socio-cultural importance of communication and put the information media at the service of education by promoting the dissemination of knowledge relating to progress in all fields.

19. One of the main obstacles to the attainment of those goals was the high cost of new communication technology. The developing countries needed modern information systems that were inexpensive and suited to their individual needs. They also needed skilled personnel for research, policy-making and project execution in the field of information. National training centres should therefore avoid wasting material and human resources, raise the level of their instruction, offer post-graduate courses and seminars and co-ordinate their activities in order to form a nucleus of experts that would be placed at the disposal of all the countries. Applied communication research must seek answers to a number of questions that were of decisive importance to developing countries, such as the influence of the media on the moulding of public opinion in the context of development; how to retain and use traditional forms of cultural expression in that context; the impact of new technologies on developing countries and the potential

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(Mr. Suryokusomo, Indonesia)

uses of various information technologies for formal or informal education in developing countries.

20. At present, developing countries were not equipped to generate and disseminate information. The greater part of the news concerning them was therefore produced by agencies which were not situated in developing countries and which too often misrepresented events in those countries and their aspirations and motivations. Developing countries could not tolerate continued dependence on information channels representing alien interests, and they must therefore seek to equip themselves with systems of their own which would be capable of supplying effective and objective information. To that end, they must concentrate on enhancing their will to achieve progress, equipping themselves with institutional mechanisms to harmonize their economic, cultural, scientific and technological policies and increasing the capacity of their information systems, gearing them to national and regional needs and integrating them at both the technical and the programme levels.

21. That process of integration and of enhancing the national will required a sustained effort and the participation of all the population. As yet, developing countries had neither the means nor the mechanisms to convey to the population, and especially to youth, the information which alone could give them a better understanding of the political, economic and social realities of their countries and of international problems.

22. In conclusion, he hoped that the United Nations, its specialized agencies and Member States would persevere in their efforts to promote recognition of the needs of developing countries with regard to information and that they would provide those countries with further assistance in that field.

23. Mr. ALVAREZ SANCHEZ (Cuba) said he was pleased that a question of such importance as the decolonization of information had been referred to the Special Political Committee. His delegation wished first of all to pay tribute to the work done by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The report submitted by the Director-General of UNESCO pursuant to General Assembly resolution 31/139 was a valuable contribution to an understanding of the problems involved and subsequent consideration of action to solve them.

24. The right of peoples and individuals with regard to information had been one of the international community's major concerns for over 15 years. During that time, the development of communication technology had been equalled only by the strengthening of the monopoly exercised in that field by the capitalist countries and the transnational agencies under their control, while there had been increasing uneasiness on the part of developing countries, which were not satisfied to remain mere receivers of imposed ideological and cultural patterns.

25. The fact that changes in the existing information order were an important factor for the economic progress of developing countries had been recognized by a number of special meetings and conferences, including the Fifth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Colombo in 1976, and

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(Mr. Alvarez Sanchez, Cuba)

by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 during their meeting at United Nations Headquarters in September 1978, when they had emphasized that the establishment of a new international economic order and the establishment of a new world information order were closely linked. However, it was to be feared that, where information was concerned, the developed countries would display the same lack of will to achieve results that constituted the main obstacle to progress in economic negotiations.

26. There was a glaring imbalance in the field of information, both quantitatively and from the point of view of content, as the representative of Tunisia had conclusively shown with the help of statistics in his recent statement to the Committee. That was why the future delegation supported the efforts exerted by the United Nations and UNESCO to achieve cultural decolonization and any action designed to enable developing countries to equip themselves with a technological infrastructure in the field of information that would allow them to make their voices heard at the international level.

27. His delegation did not underestimate the difficulty of the task. Any dialogue with the transnational monopolies, which were only concerned with increasing their power and their profits, would prove arduous. The developing countries should therefore concentrate as a matter of priority, on forming a united front and beginning a dialogue with those powers on an equal footing. Although the United Nations and UNESCO were the most appropriate forums for the conduct of negotiations on the subject, the efforts exerted by the non-aligned movement and by various organizations and groupings of developing countries, and the exercise by each country of its sovereign right to decide what kind of information it wanted to disseminate and receive, were all valid contributions to the fight for the establishment of a new world information order.

28. Since the Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized by UNESCO in Costa Rica in 1976, it was expressly recognized that access to all cultural property was a fundamental human right and that the preparation of plans and programmes for the extensive and positive use of the information media within the context of development policies was the joint responsibility of the members of society and the State, exercised under State supervision.

29. Cuba had much experience of the role which the organs of information could play in mobilizing peoples and in enhancing their awareness and their cultural development, when those organs responded to their legitimate aspirations. During its vigorous struggle against the plots - threats, blackmail and economic blockade - hatched by United States imperialism, Cuba had found in the information media valuable allies which had enabled it to impress on its people the need for certain military or economic measures, to make its views known to them and to urge them to show solidarity with the just causes of other peoples. That would not have been the case if the organs of information had been motivated only by shabby commercial considerations.

(Mr. Alvarez Sanchez, Cuba)

30. However satisfied it might be with its policy, Cuba was aware that no country could live in isolation and that exchanges in the field of communications were a necessity in modern times. For such exchanges to take place, however, the developing countries must have an adequate infrastructure, press agencies' international rates must be within their means, frequencies in the electro-magnetic spectrum for space communications must be allocated equitably and those countries must be able to use communications satellites and, needless to say, must have skilled personnel.

31. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the developing countries already had such entities as the Press Agencies Pool, the Intergovernmental Information Co-ordination Board, the Broadcasting Co-operation Committee and the Committee of Telecommunications experts, all created by the non-aligned movement, which had also instituted a system of bilateral and multilateral exchanges. Those entities and also the regional communication bodies set up by the Caribbean, Arab and Asian countries, showed that the developing countries realized the need to co-operate and to pool their resources.

32. His delegation was sure that the Committee's discussions would lead to the adoption of constructive resolutions, and wished to stress the need to continue to make in-depth studies of information problems and to include the question of information, as a priority item in the agenda for the next session of the General Assembly. It wished, lastly, to reaffirm its conviction that the decolonization of information was a priority requirement of modern times. Consistent and responsible use of the mass media to promote development, peace, international security, understanding among peoples, and to oppose war-mongering, racist and neo-colonialist factions was a legitimate and inalienable right for the developing countries, which alone could enable them to preserve their national identity and exercise their sovereignty to the full.

33. Mr. PABON (Venezuela) said that his country welcomed the adoption by the UNESCO General Conference of the Declaration of Fundamental Principles Governing the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to Promoting Human Rights and to Combating War Propaganda, Racism and Apartheid. That Declaration supplemented and reinforced the body of instruments relating to the exercise of freedom of opinion, expression and information, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted earlier by the Members of the United Nations.

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34. The Constitution of Venezuela expressly prohibited war propaganda, the use of anonymity, offences against public morals and incitement to law-breaking and, in its preamble, stressed the need to promote peace and respect for human rights, in particular the right freely to express opinions through the mass media without prior censorship. His country had also enacted a law governing the exercise of the profession of journalism, which strengthened and guaranteed freedom of expression. It was opposed to all State interference in information activities and advocated legal protection for informants.

35. At the international level, his country was helping to find solutions which would guarantee freedom of expression, the right of peoples to defend themselves against any violation of their national integrity, and the right of individuals to defend themselves against any impediment to their freedom of conscience. In order to protect peoples from a flood of information which inculcated alien values in them and threatened their national identity, it was necessary, as the President of Venezuela had pointed out at the first Intergovernmental Conference on Communications Policies in Latin America and the West Indies, held in Costa Rica in 1976, to draw up international rules guaranteeing objectivity of information and safeguarding freedom of opinion, which could not be exercised simply at the whim of governments, of international or national capital, or of professional groups. Similarly, international press agencies must not, on the basis of a misconception of freedom of information, be left to decide what information should be disseminated.

36. At the UNESCO conference held in Costa Rica, Nairobi and Bogotá, and at the General Conference which had just taken place in Paris, Venezuela had not supported the resolutions and recommendations advocating State intervention in information activities, because it believed that national communications policies must be based on the principles of freedom of thought and respect for individual and social rights.

37. The information disseminated on developing countries by the international press gave a distorted picture of the situation in those countries, and the major newspapers and audiovisual media in the industrialized world made no mention of their struggles, their efforts and their legitimate economic demands. It was therefore essential to take concrete practical measures to institute an equitable and effective world information order. That would, of course, be an arduous task but it could be accomplished, and the technical and economic means of accomplishing it were known to all.

38. The United Nations and its specialized agencies should review and revise the philosophical and theoretical bases of information in terms of the influence it could have on people's social, cultural, political and economic development. If the existing imbalance in communications was to be remedied, the technical infrastructure of the third world countries, which was at present inadequate as far as transmission and resources were concerned, must be strengthened.

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(Mr. Pabon, Venezuela)

39. His country fully supported the efforts being made to broaden the circulation of information and international exchanges, particularly in Latin America, and to provide easier access to information by establishing regional agencies to supplement the information disseminated by international press and information agencies, without restricting the activities of the latter. His country's interest in that question had prompted it to participate in the establishment of a new Latin American press agency which would soon start operating. Mention should also be made of the recent creation in Caracas of the "Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores de la Comunicación", whose main objective was to create the necessary conditions for putting an end to colonialism in the field of information in Latin America, devise regional communications policies, improve existing techniques and contribute to the establishment of a new world information order.

40. The circulation of information was not a result of development but a prerequisite for development. Venezuela's national plan therefore contained objectives, strategies and programmes which should enable it to design a national communications system and establish training programmes with a multidisciplinary approach, keeping abreast of technological developments.

41. In view of the importance of information in acquainting international public opinion with the objectives of the Organization, the United Nations Office of Public Information must be expanded so that it could perform its task satisfactorily. In that connexion, he stressed the need to increase the amount of information available in Spanish, as that language was spoken by more than 300 million people throughout the world. He congratulated the Office of Public Information on the tremendous amount of work it had done in recent years, and also welcomed the increase in the number of United Nations Information Centres.

42. In conclusion, he reiterated his country's support for all measures designed to promote freedom of information and the establishment of the new world information order in the interests of universal solidarity and peace.

43. Mr. SENGHOR (Senegal) said that his country, which had a long tradition of freedom of the press, felt that the international community, with its diversity of cultures and civilizations, could no longer be satisfied with partial and incomplete sources of information. Even if objectivity, like all ideals, was unattainable, the journalist should still show professional conscientiousness and intellectual integrity. Freedom of information must not be a privilege of the few. Defence of freedom of information could not be placed on an equal footing with defence of a de facto monopoly. As the Minister of Education of the Republic of Senegal had stated at the twentieth session of the General Conference of UNESCO in Paris, subordination of the news agencies of developing countries to the press of the developed countries was inadmissible.

44. Since freedom of information was an extension of freedom of thought, Senegal encouraged and promoted the creation and existence of newspapers and periodicals which were a true and acknowledged reflection of all political, ideological and

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(Mr. Senghor, Senegal)

cultural trends in the country. That proliferation of newspapers was simply a reflection of the spirit of democracy to which the people of Senegal were profoundly attached and which they intended to safeguard.

45. At the international level, the spirit of fraternity prevailing among journalists should be encouraged, in order to ensure better news-gathering and, consequently, better information. In that regard, all rivalry between national agencies and world agencies should be avoided, and every effort made to strengthen honest and sincere co-operation among them. He expressed satisfaction at the creation of the Press Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, under a decision taken at the Conference of Foreign Ministers of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Lima in August 1975, as well as the spirit which had prevailed at the meeting of Information Ministers and news agency representatives from 62 countries, held at New Delhi in 1976. The Press Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries at present comprised some 40 national agencies, some of which acted as regional exchange centres.

46. In spite of the immense progress made in the use and improvement of mass communications the fact remained that in no fewer than some 40 developing countries, less than 5 per cent of the population had access to a newspaper; in over 60 developing countries, more than half the population had no radios, and 30 developing countries still had no television service. The gap between developed countries and the rest of the world in mass communications was therefore considerable, and much still remained to be done.

47. Since information was a social need, and since culture and communications played a major role in the country's economic and social development, Senegal was determined to work and co-operate to ensure that communications served the interests of social progress and development. That obviously meant that a new information policy, supporting the just cause of the struggle against racial discrimination and all forms of colonialism, must be defined. The developing countries eagerly awaited the decolonization of information.

48. Mr. MILLS (Jamaica) said that the establishment of a more equitable and balanced information system was of great importance, particularly for the developing countries. Those countries realized that by expressing their dissatisfaction with the present situation they ran the risk of being misunderstood, but their efforts in that area should be seen as part of a broader movement to establish their rightful place in the cultural, political and economic life of the world community. It was part of the process of their liberation from forms of domination which had deep historical roots, a process which had begun with their struggle for political independence, and then for the establishment of the new international economic order.

49. As information matters stood, the peoples of the developing countries were forced to see the world through the eyes of the Western news agencies. The news they received was superficial or irrelevant, or marred by ethnocentric bias. It tended to undermine indigenous cultures and value systems. Furthermore, the main news agencies treated news as a commodity rather than as a social good, and ignored the achievements of the third world countries in the matter of development.

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(Mr. Mills, Jamaica)

50. At the recent General Conference of UNESCO, the Minister of Education of Jamaica, reaffirming his country's belief in a free press, had stated that freedom was not synonymous with licence, and that half truths were not a substitute for responsible reporting.

51. The Jamaican delegation felt that it was a serious mistake to represent the issue of news and information as an area of conflict between two groups of countries. There were a number of issues of considerable importance relating to the role of the media, the reporting of the news, and the compilation and availability of information within Western industrialized countries. If one could judge from current events those countries would have to face, in years to come, new problems relating to the rights of individuals to their privacy, the interests of minorities in respect of the reporting of news, and the balance between the interests of different sectors of the populations of countries, problems which called into question the role of all institutions - major corporations, trade unions, religious groups, the media and the Governments themselves. With advancing technology in the field of information, and with the emergence of new perceptions concerning internal social factors, the rights of people and global relationships there, would inevitably be new attitudes towards the role of information in the public interest.

52. One of the major obstacles to the establishment of a new international economic order was the lack of adequate public knowledge of the issues involved, the lack of understanding of the positions and attitudes of developing countries, and the negative attitudes in many quarters with regard to the aspirations of those countries. In spite of the particular problems involved, a special effort towards achieving a real public understanding of those matters was vital. It was no coincidence that the industrialized countries, which had given the firmest support to the concept of the new international economic order, were those in which a meaningful dialogue existed between the government and the public on issues relating to national and global development.

53. In order to achieve the fundamental changes they were seeking in the global information system, the developing countries had a great deal to do. Apart from improving their own information systems, they must join together and establish links with other third world countries in various related areas. The group of non-aligned countries was already working in that direction, for example by creating a news agency pool and adopting various measures to further co-operation in the field of broadcasting. The developed countries should also contribute very actively to a balanced and equitable flow of information. The measures taken by the developing countries to ensure respect for their interests and the interests of their peoples would depend on the attitude and responses of the developed countries.

54. The United Nations system had a major role to play in that connexion. Of course, its activities could only be part of a broader effort in which the Governments of member countries, the media, and educational and other institutions would participate. However, the Organization itself should strengthen and expand its action aimed at mobilizing public opinion in support of the great causes to which it was committed; that clearly presupposed that it should have the necessary budgetary provisions for that purpose.

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(Mr. Mills, Jamaica)

55. He expressed gratitude to ITU and UNESCO for their work in the field of mass communications. While noting the agreement reached at the General Conference, he stressed the differences and difficulties that still lay in the path of establishing a truly equitable system of global information and communication. Also, so long as such an information system reflected primarily the values and interests of a few countries and a few peoples, the developing countries would pursue resolutely their efforts to achieve the fundamental changes they desired.

56. Mr. SCHUTZE (Federal Republic of Germany), speaking on behalf of the nine member States of the European Economic Community on agenda item 77 (a) and (b), said that the Nine welcomed the adoption by consensus at the twentieth session of the General Conference of UNESCO of the Declaration of Fundamental Principles concerning the Mass Media, and recalled that the Nine had taken an active part in the drafting of that Declaration. Indeed, they attached particular significance to the reaffirmation of the right to freedom of opinion, expression and information and to the recognition of those principles, which were an integral part of human rights and a vital factor in the strengthening of peace and international understanding. In order to correct existing inequalities in the flow of information with and among developing countries, it was important to establish a new equilibrium and greater reciprocity, taking care to maintain the plurality and diversity of information.

57. The Secretary-General had submitted as document A/33/144 a report by the Director-General of UNESCO concerning co-operation and assistance in the application and improvement of national information and mass communication systems for social progress and development. In 1961, the Director-General of UNESCO had submitted a first report, which had been discussed by various United Nations bodies in 1962. That report had been based on two premises which were still valid, namely that the existence of adequate mass communication facilities was a prerequisite for freedom of information, and that the development of information was an integral part of economic development as a whole and consequently could be aided by technical assistance funds. Such financing was especially necessary because the under-developed countries were seeking to attain in a matter of years a level of achievement which it had taken the developed countries centuries to attain.

58. The highly developed information systems in the industrialized countries, particularly in some of them, were a historical fact which explained the existing gap between the industrialized and the developing countries in the field of information, a gap that might grow unless concerted action was taken.

59. The content and form of information must be adapted to the needs of specific regions. So far, the developing countries had not been able to play an active role either in collecting or in disseminating information, and in that connexion the Nine welcomed the fact that the developing countries had begun to take practical steps to establish their own information media both on a national basis and through various forms of co-operation.

60. The objective of any international information system should be to make the dissemination of information freer, wider and better balanced by strengthening the

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(Mr. Schutze, Federal Republic
of Germany)

machinery of international communications, and that required better co-operation among the developing countries themselves and with the industrialized countries. The members of the European Economic Community had already made substantial contributions in that field, both bilaterally and under the Lomé Convention, and they were prepared to continue their efforts in that direction. In order to be fully effective, an international effort aimed at correcting existing inequalities must also have the co-operation of the media themselves and the support of the public in the developed countries. The media in those countries must keep the public better informed about the aspirations, problems and policies of the developing countries, and to that end, journalists from industrialized countries should have better and freer access to information sources in developing countries.

61. The Nine were convinced that the establishment of a more just and equitable world economic order required better understanding of the positions and problems of other nations. Ignorance was a source of indifference and prejudice. Comprehensive and equitable international information and mass communication systems were essential to the improvement of understanding and co-operation in all aspects of international relations.

62. Turning to agenda item 77 (c) and speaking as the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany, he expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information and to the staff of the Office of Public Information for the report submitted by the Secretary-General on United Nations public information policies and activities, for their efforts to translate into practice the basic policy of the United Nations in that field, and for the way in which they performed their duties. The impartial and objective presentation of the work of the Organization, taking into account the positions and opinions of all Member States, was the best way of serving the common interest and enhance understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations.

63. The increased membership and the new tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations implied a substantial reorientation of the activities of the Office of Public Information. Taken together with the rapid development of modern communication techniques, those new demands could not be met without an increase of funds. However, the growth rate for information activities within the United Nations budget would remain limited. It was therefore of particular urgency that past priorities should be re-examined in order to meet new priorities. A greater mobility of the staff of the Office of Public Information would considerably facilitate the task of programme reorientation.

64. Increased efforts were necessary to ensure co-operation with public and private information institutions, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations in the dissemination of programmes and activities in the industrialized countries in order to ensure, in particular, a greater cost-sharing by the various users of programmes and publications. In those countries which did not have or did not yet have sufficient information infrastructures, the Office of Public Information must necessarily play a more direct role and provide practical assistance in the building up of information infrastructures.

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(Mr. Schutze, Federal Republic of Germany)

65. The information centres had an increasingly important role to play, particularly in the developing countries, where the majority were situated. They knew best regional and national information needs and they could respond to specific demands better than Headquarters. The Information Support Section should be in a position to respond more fully to the increasing number of information requests by the centres.

66. As far as radio and visual services were concerned, his delegation appreciated the streamlining of activities, the replacement of short-wave radio broadcasts by more adequate means of transmission and the priority given to supplying more news services to television and radio stations in the developing countries.

67. The growing importance of economic and social issues for the United Nations and the multiplication of organs dealing with those issues made it imperative to rigorously streamline and co-ordinate information activities in that field. The Centre for Economic and Social Information (CESI) seemed best suited for that task. The entire United Nations system needed a more concerted and harmonized approach to the definition of information priorities and the division of labour. In that respect, it was to be hoped that under ACC, the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) could assume a reinforced role in policy-making. In particular, the Secretary-General and the Office of Public Information should be given greater responsibility to determine guidelines for co-ordination within the United Nations system as a whole.

68. Summing up the position of his Government on the wide range of information-related questions, he said that there were two distinct problems. In the North-South relationship, the unequal capacity for dissemination of information was becoming more prominent. The aim must be to ensure that the world was not divided into information suppliers and information consumers. In the East-West relationship, there were on both sides fully developed information systems which had all the financial and technological means for world-wide news distribution. What was needed to achieve reciprocity was a free circulation of information, an objective set by the States signatories to the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The Federal Republic of Germany urged the pursuit of that aim by all the signatories. As his Minister for Foreign Affairs had stated at the twentieth session of the General Conference of UNESCO, there was not too much freedom of the press in the world, but too little.

69. Mr. DJELOU (Togo) commended the General Assembly decision to refer to the Special Political Committee the question of information in all its aspects.

70. The information sector had not been immune to the harmful effects of the imbalance between the developed and the developing countries, and for several years the third world had constantly cautioned the industrialized countries about the gap between the two groups of countries in all fields. Far from getting better, however, the situation had grown worse. The assistance of all kinds granted by the industrialized countries to developing countries had failed to bridge the ever-widening gap. The third world had concluded that the problem could be solved only through a radical change in the basic approach to international

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(Mr. Djelou, Togo)

relations. The appeal by the developing countries to the industrialized countries seemed to have been heard, and the latter group had agreed to participate in recent conferences on the establishment of a new economic order. The third world was beginning to campaign for the establishment of a new order for information. Some had wondered whether the third world was not trying to do two things at once. The question seemed all the more relevant as the meagre results achieved during the recent international conferences on the establishment of a new economic order had demonstrated that the rich countries were not at all prepared to give up the privileges derived from the exploitation of the poor countries. However, the developing countries had no choice. As the Tunisian Ministry of Information had rightly stated in its study contained in document A/SPC/33/L.5, "the establishment of a new world order for information now appears to be an indispensable corollary of the new international economic order". There were even those who felt, like President Senghor of Senegal, that the new order for information should precede the new economic order. His delegation went even further and considered that the concept of a new economic order should be extended simultaneously to all fields of development, because it would be futile to attempt to resolve through a series of measures the problems posed by the imbalance between the developed and the developing countries.

71. The alienating influence of the developed countries on third world countries in the economic, social and cultural fields hampered the smooth development of third-world countries. The time had come to use information as an instrument of national development and genuine international co-operation. To that end, it was imperative that the developing countries should persevere in their efforts to establish a better international society, based on justice, mutual understanding and friendly co-operation among nations. At the same time, they should continue their efforts to ensure the effective functioning of the agencies they had established in the information sector, such as the Intergovernmental Co-ordination Council on Information and the Mass Media, the Co-ordination Committee of the Press Agencies Pool, the Committee of Co-operation of the Broadcasting Organizations and the Committee of International Telecommunications Experts of the Non-Aligned Countries.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.