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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. JANNUZZI (Italy)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 74: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued) (A/39/21)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/479)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued) (A/39/497)
- (d) REPORT OF THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT AND COMMENTS THEREON (continued) (A/39/239 and Add.1 and Corr.1 and Add.2, A/39/602)

1. Mr. CHAN (Singapore) observed that, although the United Nations had for years been discussing the dangers of drought and desertification in Africa as well as the plight of the African economy, it had not been until film footage had been aired by BBC and a front page article had been published in The New York Times that the problem had started to register with the public in the developed countries. That episode illustrated perfectly the power of the media to shape public opinion and thereby to influence public policy. It emphasized the crucial importance for the public in the developed countries to be well-informed and clearly showed that to elicit a response from the industrial democracies, it was essential to attract the attention of the media.

2. That episode also showed how little control the developing countries had over what was said about them and demonstrated their dependence on the media of the developed countries, since they did not have either the infrastructure or the human and financial resources necessary to establish their own information networks.

3. The domination of world public opinion by the media of the developed countries was at the origin of the debate on the new world information and communication order. The debate had begun in 1972, and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had actively participated in it over the years, for example by calling for the reorganization of the existing communications channels, which hampered free communication between the developing countries, and by deciding on an urgent programme of reforms in the field of information with a view to preserving indigenous cultures, ensuring the objectivity of information and using such information for the purpose of economic development.

4. From the start, it had been obvious that agreement on the issue of the establishment of a new world information and communication order would be difficult, not only because of the economic interests involved but also because of the philosophical North-South and East-West differences. The Western countries had tended to emphasize issues concerning press control and free access for journalists to information. For the developing countries, the new information order should deal with the complex implications of the notion of dependence. Referring to technological developments, he wondered whether the developing countries should merely accept the electronic revolution passively by acquiring the latest equipment

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(Mr. Chan, Singapore)

and adopting both the technology and the cultural perspective of the new information society and, if so, whether they could afford the necessary financial investments and what real benefits they would reap.

5. There was clearly a conflict between the needs of the third world, as defined in the context of UNESCO and the Non-Aligned Movement, and the doctrines governing the creation and distribution of information in the West, and it would take more than words to bridge the gulf between those differing perceptions. Perhaps the developing countries could claim a small victory, since the developed nations had acknowledged that there had been such domination and that steps should be taken to correct the imbalance, for example in the context of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). However, the issue deserved serious consideration, because the notion of a free and balanced flow of information referred to the flow not only between nations but also within nations. For the developing countries, the process of democratizing information might imply a new definition of the notion of freedom of information in its widest context.

6. It would take time to find a solution to those questions. Consequently tinkering with the broad concept of the new world information order would not change reality but would be interpreted by the developing countries as a retreat from the commitment made by the developed countries to an agreed objective.

7. As to the programme of the Department of Public Information, his delegation supported the pilot project for short-wave broadcasting from Headquarters and for an evaluation of audience response. However, it should not be forgotten that, in order to be successful, such a programme must disseminate information which the audience considered to be important and relevant.

8. His delegation was pleased to hear that the evaluation of the effectiveness of DPI programmes would be carried out in the context of a pilot project on the use of radio material. However, it was important not to expect too much from such evaluations, because, while it was easy to obtain quantitative data, the qualitative reactions of the audience were much more difficult to ascertain.

9. The crisis of confidence in the United Nations, its deteriorating public image and the attacks levelled against it were a cause of concern. Although it was difficult to respond to criticism about United Nations decisions and resolutions, which had been adopted by Member States, criticism about the functioning of the Organization should be examined closely and, if it proved to be valid, it was the responsibility of the Secretary-General to rectify the faults indicated.

10. Mr. CHERNOGUZ (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the information explosion resulting from technological progress was having increasingly negative repercussions both on the lives of individuals and on relations between peoples and States. The imperialist circles continued to use the powerful information tool for purposes which were contrary to peace and international co-operation and to whitewash policies which involved an arms build-up, military superiority and world domination, under the slogan: peace from a position of strength. That psychological warfare, which was illustrated by the subversive activities carried

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(Mr. Chernoguz, Ukrainian SSR)

out by United States radio stations against the socialist countries of Europe and against Cuba, constituted an inexcusable attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of States. In that context, the declarations made by the member countries of NATO in favour of peace and the development of constructive relations should be followed by tangible action for example by putting an end to the dissemination of false information and military and racist propaganda. His delegation condemned those practices, which poisoned the climate of international relations.

11. A return to détente required the dissemination of accurate information which helped to re-establish a climate of confidence among peoples and mutual co-operation. That position of principle, formulated in the Prague Political Declaration of the Warsaw Treaty member States, lay at the foundation of the Soviet Union's specific policy and practice. True to its principles, the USSR had put forward in 1983 the idea of the inadmissibility of disseminating political and military doctrines and concepts which tended to justify the first use of or recourse to nuclear weapons in general, while in 1984 it had raised the question of the inadmissibility of the policy of State terrorism and any actions by States aimed at undermining the socio-political system in other sovereign States. Those two proposals thus dealt with the inadmissibility of subversive propaganda and coincided in that respect with the position of the non-aligned countries which, at the end of the Djakarta Conference, had launched an appeal to the information media asking them to strengthen the struggle for a return to détente, for the establishment of a just and lasting peace and for the cessation of hostile radio propaganda, which was regarded as incompatible with the principles of international law. The Ukrainian delegation supported both the Djakarta Appeal and the resolution adopted on that occasion, supporting the role of UNESCO.

12. Internationally recognized legal norms and principles for the activities of the information media should be drawn up, in the interests of peace, détente and mutual co-operation, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Declaration on information adopted by UNESCO in 1978. The question of a new world information and communication order, whose establishment was the necessary prerequisite for establishing fair and equitable international relations, should be viewed in that context. The new order would allow the introduction of greater justice in international exchanges of information, as it would enable developing countries to free themselves from imperialism in that sphere so as to achieve their independence and create their own information system.

13. The Ukrainian delegation approved of the action taken to that end by UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication. However, that action was encountering various obstacles raised by certain States, which were going so far as to bring outright pressure and blackmail to bear against UNESCO. His delegation condemned those unworthy acts, just as it condemned the attempt of certain Western countries to deprive the new world information order of its progressive and anti-imperialist content in order to shape it to the interests of information monopolies that clung to their dominant position. That policy, which was designed to nullify the developing countries' efforts to achieve equality in

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the information field, took the form of calling for unlimited freedom for information flows, a freedom which, without adequate guarantees, would only be freedom of action for the press of capitalism and the monopolies. Given those attacks against the new world information order, his delegation wished to emphasize the importance of the round table to be convened jointly by UNESCO and the United Nations in 1985 to prepare the concept of the new order, in particular the contribution of the media to mutual respect, international understanding, respect of human rights and peace, and to the elucidation of major world problems.

14. The Ukraine, which had suffered so much during the Second World War, believed that the observance in 1985 of the fortieth anniversaries of the victory over fascism and of the establishment of the United Nations should be an occasion for the whole international community to promote the use of the information media in the interests of peace and mutual co-operation, and for the dissemination of objective information about the positive achievements of the United Nations and its role as an instrument of peace and co-operation among States. A special programme of information measures should be set in motion on that occasion.

15. With regard to the Department of Public Information's important general role of co-ordination, the Ukrainian delegation thought it was of the utmost importance to respect the priorities established by the General Assembly, namely, the strengthening of international peace and security and disarmament. Information produced by the Department should meet the two requirements of objectivity and balance. In order to achieve greater efficiency in that field, imbalances in the geographical distribution of posts, which affected the socialist States in particular, should be eliminated. As for the activities themselves, it was necessary to improve their quality while at the same time striving to effect savings with the resources allocated to the Department. To that end, resources should be distributed according to priorities and outdated programmes should be eliminated.

16. The Ukrainian delegation had taken note of the reports of the Secretary-General and of the Director-General of UNESCO, and had studied the report of the Committee on Information and the recommendations it contained. It thought that those recommendations deserved serious attention and should be taken into consideration in the Organization's future activities in the information field.

17. Mr. BA-ISSA (Democratic Yemen) said that as genuine information was the surest means of eliminating ignorance, exploitation and backwardness, the right to information was a natural right of all peoples. However, the problem was that certain industrialized countries refused to recognize the sovereignty and equality of other States and regarded the exercise of their rights by the majority as an attack on their own interests and values. Those industrialized countries had thus reached the point of launching an unfair campaign against the United Nations so as to cast doubt on the validity and objectivity of its role, and of firmly opposing the establishment of a new world information and communication order, even though it had been made necessary by the radical changes which had taken place since the end of the Second World War.

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(Mr. Ba-Issa, Democratic Yemen)

18. Information was a complex and delicate area in a world which was far from model or perfect. It was not normal that a large number of countries still experiencing crucial problems of hunger, disease and illiteracy, and concerned above all with their development, should be subject to the whims of a restricted number of private companies monopolizing the most modern information and communications media which were deluging other countries with their floods of propaganda, forcing on them the values of the consumer society and assisting the psychological warfare waged by imperialism.

19. In an effort to put an end to the cultural colonialism of which they were still victims and to create true and objective information focused on their own priorities and on the quest for peace and development the developing countries were seeking to establish a new world information and communication order. The final document of the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned States, meeting at Djakarta, had thus reaffirmed the need to ensure that information flows were fair and objective and served the interests of the peoples and their advancement. Those principles were also to be found in the recommendations drawn up by the Committee on Information with a view to ensuring objective and balanced international information that could reduce tension and misunderstanding and strengthen the foundations of security and development. He hoped that those recommendations would meet with general acceptance.

20. To ensure that strengthening of the role of information, it was necessary to reinforce the means and capabilities of the developing countries at the national level, to promote co-ordination and co-operation in the information field at the regional level, and to reduce the role of the monopolies exploiting the information media and increase sources of information at the international level. UNESCO had a guiding role of prime importance to play in that context and its programmes and activities therefore deserved encouragement and support.

21. As for the United Nations, action should be taken on the occasion of the observance of its fortieth anniversary to publicize the noble principles of its Charter, its achievements and the conditions for its success, since it provided the proper framework for seeking lasting solutions to structural problems in the world, including those regarding information. Nor should it be forgotten that the non-implementation of its decisions could only harm its image. Democratic Yemen therefore hoped that the countries concerned would have the broadmindedness and the political will to reach an agreement, accompanied by specific measures for its implementation, on the establishment of a new world information order which would strengthen the Organization's role and open up the way to a world in which justice and stability reigned.

22. Mr. PAPUCIU (Albania) said that the subject under consideration was of great importance and was rightly a matter of concern to international public opinion because of the discriminatory activities and practices directed against other countries by the two imperialist super-Powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. By virtue of their great technical possibilities and the new mass media, they had established a monopoly in the field of communications and were seeking to

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(Mr. Papuciu, Albania)

prevent democratic and progressive countries from receiving and disseminating information reflecting their endeavours and struggle and the aspirations of the people of the developing countries.

23. The facts showed that while the super-Powers and other imperialist Powers talked of their alleged respect for the sovereignty and equality of States and of their assistance to developing countries in the establishment of independent information systems, their real aim was to dominate those countries and trample on their sovereignty and independence.

24. His delegation considered that the dissemination of information should be based on mutual benefit and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, without discrimination and without prejudice. It supported the efforts of countries which were struggling to preserve their identity and their political, economic and cultural sovereignty. It condemned the ideological aggression indulged in by the super-Powers under the cloak of such slogans as "the flow of information" and "free press". Those slogans concealed attempts to force peoples to endure oppression and exploitation by imposing on them a cosmopolitan philosophy and alien influences. Their aim was to undermine the historical traditions, national culture, individuality and originality of all peoples.

25. The pressures exerted by the two imperialist super-Powers in the field of information formed an integral part of their neo-colonialist policies. Ideological aggression was preparing the way for actual military aggression by subjugating peoples and countries.

26. Information and communication problems had become more acute because of the worsening of the general crisis afflicting the capitalist and revisionist world, and the oppressive, exploitative and discriminatory policies of the United States and the Soviet Union. Although those countries loudly proclaimed the alleged non-political character of the information they disseminated, that information had a very marked political nature and served their aggressive and expansionist interests. A blatant example was the attitude towards UNESCO of the United States which had applied economic and financial pressure to impose its diktat on that international organization.

27. His delegation associated itself with the statements made in the Committee on the need for fair and equal co-operation between States, peoples and nations in the area of information. There was no doubt that such co-operation on a basis of equality and mutual interest could promote not only recognition of values helpful to the progress of humanity but also the consolidation of peace, friendship and understanding among peoples. Albania actively supported the efforts of developing countries to set up national information services and put an end to their dependence on the information agencies of imperialist countries.

28. In socialist Albania the information media were in the hands of the people, directly serving the fundamental interests of the building of a socialist society. Information and other communications media gave expression to and defended the

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interests of the working class and the labouring masses. On 29 November, the Albanian people would celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the liberation of the motherland and of the victory of the people's revolution. In those 40 years, the press and propaganda media had made significant progress. Whereas before the liberation only six newspapers had been published in Albania, there were now 100 newspapers and magazines in the country. Albania's telegraphic agency and radio and television service had increased exchanges of information and of radio and television broadcasts with a certain number of countries on the basis of bilateral agreements which enhanced mutual understanding among peoples and consolidated their friendship. The radio and television service and local radio stations daily transmitted dozens of programmes with a high ideological, theoretical, scientific and public interest content. The aim of the mass media was to keep the Albanian people informed about world events and the struggle and efforts of peoples for freedom and national independence and against the super-Powers and their war-mongering aggressive policies.

29. Together with freedom- and peace-loving countries throughout the world, Albania fully supported efforts aimed at preventing foreign capital from operating in any shape or form, including that of information, in the national territory of any country, in order to combat the ideological aggression, economic expansion and hegemonism of the super-Powers.

30. Mr. JOUSHAN (Afghanistan) said that a change in the prevailing conditions in the international exchange of information was in the interest of all countries. The Charter of the United Nations, the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference and the 1978 UNESCO Declaration on Information had laid down fundamental principles governing the international exchange of information.

31. The need to establish a new world information and communication order was particularly felt by the developing countries, whose culture had always been threatened by countries still under colonialism and by the non-aligned and socialist countries. The Western media showered them with false information and hostile propaganda designed to provoke disharmony and sow mistrust among peoples. The psychological war waged by the imperialist countries had escalated to unprecedented heights and the Western media which they monopolized had become one of the main instruments of interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States. An example of that was the subversive propaganda spread via the airwaves by American radio stations in Europe such as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, and by Radio Martí, set up and financed by the CIA, whose broadcasts beamed at Cuba were an obvious cause of tension in the region. The armed invasion of Grenada by the United States was a source of concern to the international community and to the people of that region in particular.

32. Since the earliest days of the April 1978 revolution, Afghanistan had been the target of a massive propaganda campaign by the media of the United States and other Western countries, such as the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Voice of America and Deutsche Welle of the Federal Republic of Germany. The Governments and intelligence services of those countries had increased their broadcasts in Pashto

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(Mr. Joushan, Afghanistan)

and Dari, the two official languages of Afghanistan, to such an extent that the weekly total of hours of propaganda broadcasts exceeded that of national radio stations.

33. Despite the rabid assaults of their enemies, however, the Afghan people were continuing along their chosen path and working to build a new society. The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan was and would remain a progressive, independent and non-aligned country. It reaffirmed its solidarity with the fight to establish a new international information and communication order, for the purpose of strengthening peace and security and understanding among nations and expanding the struggle for disarmament and against racism, apartheid, colonialism and war, especially nuclear war. That was in conformity with the decisions taken by the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held at New Delhi in 1983, with which Afghanistan had associated itself.

34. Despite the opposition of those who wished to maintain a monopoly of information, the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool, with the co-operation of the Department of Public Information and other United Nations bodies and agencies, would certainly be able to acquire the necessary experience and capability to serve the cause of peace, independence, social progress and co-operation among nations. The implementation of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication would constitute an important step towards the fulfilment of those objectives.

35. Lastly, his delegation fully subscribed to the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/39/479 as well as with the recommendations of the Committee on Information.

36. Mr. KOENTARSO (Indonesia) recalled the initiative taken by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries to make the question of the establishment of a new world information and communication order a priority of the international community and the concerted efforts made to that end by the United Nations and other organizations such as UNESCO. The fundamental role of information in the highly complex and interdependent modern world required a firm commitment from States and groups of States to the elimination of inequalities and other obstacles in that field. The overwhelming majority of Members regarded the current state of the information and communication order as wholly inadequate and incongruous in an international environment where independent States, liberated from colonialism, struggled to promote development and to preserve their own culture and indigenous life-style. The monopoly of international information and communication exercised by a few States and their transnational news agencies weakened the infrastructure of other States, which were prevented thereby from exercising their political, economic and cultural sovereignty.

37. The report of the Committee on Information (A/39/21) contained 59 recommendations, all adopted without a vote, concerning a series of proposals and programmes aimed at redressing the situation. Some merited particular attention, such as the need for more collaboration by the member States and the

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whole United Nations system in establishing a new world information and communication order, and the need to guarantee and promote access by developing countries to communication technology, including satellites, informatics and modern electronic information systems. The opening of new United Nations information centres, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report, was a further commendable step. Consultations on the reopening of the United Nations Information Centre at Jakarta had reached their final phase and Indonesia was looking forward to the resumption of the Centre's activities in the near future. The UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) was also an important contribution, and his delegation greatly appreciated the funds provided for various projects in the Asia-Pacific region, such as the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development, the Asia-Pacific news network and training in film production and archive maintenance.

38. In 1984, real progress had been made towards the establishment of a new international information and communication order. In January, Indonesia had hosted the Conference of the Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries, which had concluded, inter alia, that developing countries continued to depend on inappropriate international information structures that impeded their ability to develop their own policies free from interference or intervention, and in harmony with their own history, social values, cultural traditions and developmental priorities. The importance that non-aligned countries attached to that fundamental point could not be overemphasized and, indeed, was the *raison d'être* of the new order. The Conference welcomed the co-operative links established with other States, regional and international organizations, the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool - the broadcasting organizations of the non-aligned countries and the InterGovernmental Council of IPDC. Co-operation had been established, in particular, with regard to the exchange of televised information, the development of communication infrastructure, training for the printed press, radio broadcast programmes and film, and the reduction of telecommunication tariff rates. The non-aligned countries strengthened and co-ordinated all those activities with the assistance of the UNESCO Committee on Information, through its International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), UNDP and ITU.

39. Following the Jakarta Conference, the Ministers of Information and Communication of the non-aligned countries had met at Cairo in May 1984. The Ministers had decided to reduce telecommunication tariffs significantly in countries which hosted distribution centres of the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool.

40. Through its participation in the work of the Committee on Information since the latter's inception and its efforts in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Indonesia had committed itself to promoting the establishment of a new world information and communication order. It was convinced that the progressive decolonization of information and communication was an integral part of the effort to enable developing countries to enjoy the exercise of all their rights.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.