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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DIALLO (Guinea)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 75: UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORKS AGENCY FOR PALESTINE REFUGEES IN THE NEAR EAST (continued) (A/SPC/39/L.7-L.17)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/13)
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- (d) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/375, 457, 411, 464 and Add.1, 538, 372 and 528)

1. Mr. SCHIFTER (United States of America), in introducing draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.7 which called upon Governments to provide assistance to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, said that various observers, including senior United States officials who recently visited the area, had been able to ascertain that the efforts being made by the Commissioner-General were effective, and that he was using the resources at his disposal.

2. The most generous efforts possible should be made in order to enable the Agency to continue its humanitarian work. United States support of UNRWA did not mean that his Government did not want to resolve the problems which had necessitated the creation of the Agency. A political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict was a priority of the United States Government, which continued to believe that Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 were the correct bases for such a settlement.

3. While it appreciated the Agency's humanitarian role, the United States would be glad to see it complete its operations in the near future as a result of a settlement of the conflict.

4. Mr. SERRY (Netherlands), in introducing draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.8 on the Working Group on the Financing of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, noted that, in its report (A/39/575), the Working Group had pointed out that the prospects for 1985 were grim. The net cash requirements for 1985 had been estimated at \$225.3 million, some \$60 million more than had been forthcoming in 1984. If current trends in expenditure and income continued, the Agency would not be able to get through the year without a financial crisis.

5. The sponsors of the draft resolution expressed the hope that the Committee, as in previous years, would adopt the text without a vote so that the Working Group would be able to continue its efforts and thus make it possible for the Agency to continue to render its indispensable humanitarian services.

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6. Mr. DAFGARD (Sweden) introduced on behalf of the co-sponsors, which had been joined by India, draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.9 on assistance to persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities. Like previous draft resolutions on the issue, its goal was to make a strong appeal to all Governments to contribute generously to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and to the other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned.

7. The sponsors expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

8. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) introduced draft resolutions A/SPC/39/L.10 on offers by Member States of grants and scholarships for higher education, including vocational training, for the Palestine refugees, L.13 on the inalienable right of all displaced inhabitants to return to their homes, L.14 on revenues derived from Palestine refugee properties, and L.17 on the University of Jerusalem "Al-Quds" for Palestine refugees, and cited their principal provisions.

9. India had subsequently joined the co-sponsors of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.17.

10. Mrs. SHAKIL (Pakistan) introduced four draft resolutions, all relating to Palestine refugees whose pathetic situation, described in the report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for the period from 1 July 1983 to 30 June 1984 (A/39/13), was a result of the continued aggressive policies of Israel.

11. Draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.11, which India had subsequently joined as a co-sponsor, dealt with Palestine refugees in the Gaza Strip and in it the General Assembly reiterated its demand that Israel desist from the removal and resettlement of Palestine refugees in that region and from the destruction of their shelters.

12. Draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.12 on the resumption of the ration distribution to Palestine refugees was aimed at obtaining the necessary resources to cover the financing of the ration distribution programme, which had had to be interrupted because of a lack of funds.

13. With regard to draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.15 entitled "Protection of Palestine refugees" and motivated by the acts of violence to which they had been subjected in southern Lebanon, she recalled its principal provisions as well as paragraphs 30 and 32 of the report of the Commissioner-General (A/39/13), which listed the serious incidents that had taken place during the year: it was inadmissible that the Palestine refugees should continue to suffer while Israel continued to flout the will of the international community.

14. After citing the two operative paragraphs of draft resolution A/SPC/39/L.16 on Palestine refugees in the West Bank, the delegation of Pakistan called upon Member States to remedy as soon as possible the situation of the Palestine refugees, taking into account the appeals contained in the draft resolutions sponsored not

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(Mrs. Shakil, Pakistan)

only by Arab and Muslim countries, but also by countries in other regions concerned at the increasing seriousness of the problem of refugees in the world.

15. There could be no peace in the Middle East as long as the injustices to which the refugees were subjected continued. Pakistan fervently hoped that the Palestinian people would soon be able to exercise its legitimate rights to self-determination and nationhood.

16. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would take a decision on the draft resolutions pertaining to item 75 on Monday, 12 November.

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)

17. Mr. CHEN-CHARPENTIER (Mexico) said that there had been a lively discussion of the questions under consideration because they cast doubt on fundamental elements of international relations which could not be equitable as long as the structures impeding the balanced dissemination of information continued to exist.

18. The General Assembly had recognized the clear need to change the state of dependence of developing countries in the field of information and communication. That dependence was attributable not only to underdevelopment, but resulted also from the hegemonist designs of certain countries. The opposition to forms of domination which were all the more harmful to national interests because of their insidious aspects had given rise to the proposals of developing countries concerning the establishment of a new world information and communication order, which fitted naturally into the context of the restructuring of North-South relations.

19. A legal framework and a code of conduct must be established in order to put an end to the monopoly currently exercised by some transnational news agencies. Vigorous action needed to be taken without delay, because the improvement of information techniques over the past decades had further widened the gap between countries. The structural weaknesses of the developing countries were thus aggravated by scientific and technological advances which concentrated the information monopoly in a small number of countries, and threatened to impose a standardized cultural pattern throughout the world. A new order, therefore, could be established only through co-operation and mutual assistance. Frustrating the aspirations of developing countries could only lead to confrontation and an increase in the disparities.

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(Mr. Chen-Charpentier, Mexico)

20. Mexico paid tribute to the important part played by UNESCO in promoting the establishment of a new world information and communication order, and supported the activities of the Department of Public Information, which were essential at a time when multilateralism was being criticized. Certain parties thought they could better defend their interests better on the basis of bilateralism, despite the asymmetry of such a relationship, because they had no concern for the common interest. The celebration in 1985 of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples gave the Department of Public Information an opportunity to make noble objectives of the Charter and the achievements of the Organization more widely known, and to combat the disinformation campaign being waged against it.

21. The Committee on Information, in whose work he had participated as an observer and as the spokesman of the developing countries, had submitted in its report (A/39/21) 59 recommendations which had been adopted as a result of mutual concessions, particularly on the part of the Group of 77. Four delegations had expressed reservations. It had been pointed out that the Committee would not have to discuss those recommendations. That was true, provided that the consideration of new proposals was not excluded; otherwise, the legitimate interests of certain States Members of the Organization might be impaired.

22. In view of its great interest in the establishment of a new world information and communication order - which was far more than a merely technical issue - Mexico wished to become a member of the Committee on Information and would like to have the support of the Special Political Committee for that purpose.

23. Mr. PHAM NGAC (Viet Nam) said that the Committee on Information had had a long and difficult substantive session and that, although its report had been adopted without a vote, it had given rise to reservations expressed by four delegations from Western countries. The right to communicate was a fundamental human right and information was a vital resource for the exercise of political, economic and cultural power, both nationally and internationally. Likewise, the exchange of information was necessary for the promotion of international communication and co-operation and of social development. The majority of countries, especially the developing countries, were victims of the fact that the international media were dominated by the imperialist countries, which monopolized news distribution thus creating a quantitative imbalance in the flow of news between developed and developing countries. In terms of quality, most information concerning developing countries, far from reflecting truthfully their efforts to overcome the consequences of colonialism and neo-colonialism, portrayed a dismal and disdainful picture of their economic and social situation and attempted to provoke hostility against them. Furthermore, the capitalist groups were using their information media to poison international relations and incite war. Over the past few years, imperialist propaganda had attempted alternately to minimize and to justify the arms race and the militarization of outer space, even claiming that those activities increased the security of the planet and openly defending the possibility of a "limited" nuclear war.

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(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

24. At the same time, the imperialist propaganda centres were engaging in psychological warfare against the socialist countries: the United States and other reactionary forces, by means of the free radio stations which they financed, were attempting to stir up, through their provocation and slander, hostility against the countries to which they were politically opposed. In other words, those countries had institutionalized interference in the internal affairs of other States and the conduct of subversive activities against them.

25. At the regional level, information was distorted in order to incite rivalry among neighbouring countries, particularly when they belonged to different socio-political systems, thus causing instability at both national and regional levels. In view of the gravity of the situation, the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned States, held in Jakarta, had adopted a resolution condemning hostile broadcasts against non-aligned countries and calling for the immediate termination of all broadcasts directed against the national interests of another country.

26. Viet Nam, like her two sister countries in the Indo-China peninsula had for a long time been the victim of the imperialist and reactionary forces. Over the past 40 years, the Vietnamese people had suffered from all kinds of warfare, short of nuclear war. The reactionary and imperialist forces, moreover, had attempted to destabilize Viet Nam by wicked manoeuvres and by using all possible propaganda instruments in order to give a distorted picture of the long and just struggle waged by the Vietnamese people to defend their national independence. Those forces also attacked the spirit of unity which inspired the three Indo-Chinese peoples in their struggle against their common enemies.

27. The falsification of the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which had enabled the United States to launch a criminal air war against Viet Nam, was the most typical example of such activities. Recently, the accusations fabricated by those who sought, in order to vilify the heroic struggle of the three Indo-Chinese countries, to make believe that chemical weapons had been used had come to nothing when it had transpired that the "yellow rain" was caused by swarms of bees. Thence it might be concluded that Western public opinion and even the Congress of a great Power could be easily misled by their Governments through their own mass media.

28. The Vietnamese delegation fully supported the efforts of all countries, particularly the developing countries and the non-aligned countries, to decolonize information and establish a new world information and communication order which would contribute to the promotion of international peace and understanding among nations. It was closely linked to the new international economic order and was an integral part of the international development process.

29. The new world information and communication order should be based on recognized guidelines, namely, the use of information for the promotion of peace and social progress and the orientation of the mass media towards the creation of a climate of confidence and understanding among peoples and co-operation among States. The States which claimed that those guidelines would be counter-productive

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(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

and might be an impediment to the establishment of the new world order used sheer sophistry with a view to retaining their monopoly. Indeed, to refuse to accept the elaboration of the guidelines was tantamount to opposing peace and rejecting the basic principles of international law and of the Charter of the United Nations.

30. Viet Nam, which through its age-old civilization could make its own contribution to the exchange of information, favoured the free flow of information when it helped to promote international peace and understanding and respect for national independence and sovereignty. His country was opposed to it when it fomented hatred between nations, interfered in the internal affairs of a sovereign State or incited subversive activities.

31. Viet Nam welcomed the steps taken by the non-aligned countries in strengthening and expanding their national information and communication systems, deepening co-operation in the sector and establishing their own information and communication services and organizations. Those measures, which deserved to be encouraged, constituted positive steps towards the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

32. At a time of growing international tension, it was of paramount importance for information activities to be linked first and foremost with the strengthening of international peace and security, the promotion of disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war. To that end, the mass media had an important role to play. In that connection, his delegation drew attention to the Declaration on the Relationship between Peace and Development, adopted by the heads of 10 socialist countries in Moscow on 15 June 1984, to the Political Declaration of the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries and to the Declaration of the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries, held at Jakarta. His delegation proposed that those documents should be given wider distribution in the United Nations and should enjoy the full support of Member States.

33. Referring to the work of UNESCO, his delegation reiterated its support for the activities and systematic efforts undertaken by UNESCO with a view to the establishment of a new world information and communication order and welcomed the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), whose activities greatly benefited the developing countries. He expressed the hope that UNESCO would pursue its task, in accordance with the recommendations adopted by the Committee on Information. However, the pressure exerted by the Government of the United States to induce UNESCO to change its course continued to be a cause of concern. The United States was manifesting once again its policy of diktat and blackmail towards the United Nations and its affiliated organs. To oppose UNESCO was tantamount to opposing the establishment of a new world information and communication order, in other words, to opposing the efforts of the majority of countries, which desired positive change in that field. As far as his delegation was concerned, it totally agreed with the Jakarta resolution which supported the role of UNESCO.

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(Mr. Pham Ngac, Viet Nam)

34. The progress made by the Department of Public Information in pursuing its work and improving its effectiveness was encouraging. Co-operation between the Department of Public Information and both UNESCO and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies should be strengthened, as was emphasized in the report of the Committee on Information. More attention should also be devoted to the priorities of the Department of Public Information, especially those set forth in General Assembly resolutions 35/201 and 37/94.

35. It was men, who were created equal, who must remedy the inequalities they had created and, accordingly, the establishment of a new world information and communication order was inevitable.

36. Mr. BOLD (Mongolia) observed that, as a member of the Committee on Information, Mongolia actively participated in its work, and he drew attention to the considerable influence information had in the shaping of public opinion in the current world. Unfortunately, far from disseminating objective information, the media and propaganda centres of the Western countries sowed lies and slander, thereby arousing dissension and distrust among peoples. The media were becoming a tool of psychological warfare, and the consequent manipulation was intensifying the arms race and worked as a catalyst in aggravating international tension and generating hostility between peoples and countries.

37. By virtue of the fact that they possessed the most modern technical means in addition to great mobilizing force, the media had special responsibilities and should display objectivity and honesty above all else. For that reason, his delegation continued to advocate the elaboration, in the context of the United Nations, of norms and principles of international law to govern their activities. Their activities must serve the interests of security and the development of international co-operation, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the UNESCO Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War.

38. States should redouble their efforts, particularly in the United Nations, to correct the imbalance and the inequalities which existed in the distribution of information media and which were exacerbated under the influence of the Western information monopolies. Mongolia continued to seek in every international forum to promote the establishment of a new world information and communication order and to foster the restructuring of the corresponding international relations on just and democratic bases. His delegation had repeatedly supported the resolutions to that effect, in addition to the Political Declaration of the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries and the Declaration of the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries, held at Jakarta. His delegation also supported the demands of the developing countries, which were calling for the end of information imperialism.

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(Mr. Bold, Mongolia)

39. Referring to the activities of UNESCO, he paid a tribute to the important role it played in the establishment of a new world information order. The slur campaign, crass pressure and blackmail used by the United States and some of its allies against UNESCO should be strongly condemned by the General Assembly.

40. His delegation recognized the positive role played by the United Nations information bodies, in particular the Department of Public Information. However, in disseminating information about the role and activities of the United Nations, it was essential for the Department to observe the priorities laid down by the General Assembly in resolution 34/182. It was also necessary to improve the contents of its publications, to seek more actively to ensure a balance between the official languages used and, in future, to guarantee a better geographical balance in the composition of its staff.

41. His delegation approved of the activities which the Committee on Information had carried out in 1984 and of the recommendations contained in its report, particularly in paragraph 24, concerning the celebration by the international community of the fortieth anniversary of the creation of the United Nations and of the victory over fascism at the end of the Second World War, and in paragraph 59, concerning the World Disarmament Campaign and Disarmament Week. In fact, his delegation was prepared to endorse all the recommendations made by the Committee on Information.

42. Mr. KOTSEV (Bulgaria) said that the international situation had deteriorated, and the danger of nuclear war had been aggravated, as a result of the activities of imperialist circles in some Western countries, above all in the United States, which had been pursuing a policy of confrontation and an unprecedented escalation of the arms race, of interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States, and of overt and covert aggression. Psychological and ideological warfare against the socialist countries and many of the developing countries had also been stepped up. Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which had been set up, supervised and financed by the United States of America, had played a substantial role in that campaign. The imperialist information centres had been trying with all the means at their disposal to justify in the eyes of public opinion their militaristic and hegemonistic ambitions and to blame the socialist countries and the national liberation movements for the exacerbation of international tensions.

43. In those circumstances, there was no task more important than that of preserving peace and saving human civilization. In their declaration of 14 June 1984, the States members of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance had declared that it was essential for all parliaments and Governments and for the world community at large to join forces in strengthening peace, curbing the arms race, bringing about disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and normalizing international economic relations in the interests of all countries and peoples. The mass media had a major role to play in the attainment of those goals and thence the importance of questions relating to information.

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(Mr. Kotsev, Bulgaria)

44. Given that information shaped public opinion and individual conduct, its character and substance were of paramount importance. His country had always supported the dissemination of balanced, objective and faithful information which would contribute to mutual understanding among peoples and to the strengthening of confidence among States and would promote the ideals of progress and peace. That could be brought about by elaborating and adopting, on a multilateral basis and within the framework of the United Nations, the principles of a new world information and communication order. Certain countries, however, were opposed to that, arguing that such steps might jeopardize freedom of information and the independence of the mass media. That was a spurious argument which attempted to justify the slanderous campaigns of the imperialist information monopolies.

45. Since freedom of information was a fundamental human right, the present state of affairs in the field of information called for urgent measures by the international community to overcome the enormous imbalance in the dissemination of information and to restructure international relations in the field on a just and democratic basis by granting the developed countries the necessary technical assistance. Those problems, which had been the subject of discussion for many years in the United Nations, UNESCO and other international forums, had not yet met with a practical solution. Moreover, attempts had been made to change the concept and substance of the new world information and communication order, obviously in order to prolong the dependence of the developing countries on the Western information monopolies and to expand the influence of information imperialism.

46. His country actively supported the substantive role of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries in establishing more just and equitable international relations in the field of information and communication. It also supported the conclusions and recommendations on questions relating to information contained in the Political Declaration adopted in March 1983 at New Delhi, the decisions and resolutions of the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned States, held at Jakarta, and the Declaration and the Appeal to the Mass Media adopted by that Conference.

47. The pivotal role of UNESCO in the field of information and communication was universally recognized. His country had actively participated in the work of UNESCO and would be the host of its twenty-third General Conference. It was for that reason that the Bulgarian public disapproved of the decision of the United States to withdraw from UNESCO unless substantial changes were made by the end of the year. Such conduct was incompatible with the norms of international relations. The violation of the principle of universality was a blow not only against UNESCO but also against the entire United Nations system. His country would continue to support the activities of UNESCO, which were aimed at promoting peace, security and understanding among nations and at establishing new principles in the field of information and communication.

48. As a member of the Committee on Information, his country had approved its report and deeply regretted that, owing to the obstruction of some delegations, that Committee had been unable to reach consensus on its draft recommendations to the General Assembly.

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(Mr. Kotsev, Bulgaria)

49. The other documents under consideration by the Committee objectively reflected the work done in the field of public information. In the worsened international situation, the activities of UNESCO, the Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information took on a special importance. DPI was confronted with a number of question of an organizational nature, including that of the equitable geographical distribution of posts. It should, in that connection, be noted that not only had the Eastern European countries been under represented for many years, but their position had deteriorated because of the increase in the representation of the Western countries. Urgent measures should be taken to correct that unacceptable situation.

50. In conclusion, he reaffirmed that his country would continue to participate in and contribute to United Nations activities aimed at creating a new, more just international information and communication order and at using the mass media in the interests of peace, understanding and co-operation among peoples.

51. Mr. SHEHATA (Egypt) paid a tribute to the work of the Chairman of the Committee on Information and to the progress made by the Department of Public Information (DPI) in implementing the recommendations of the Committee and by UNESCO in the promotion of the new international information order. That order was the child of the new international economic order, which in turn was a product of political self-determination, one of the most significant events of the century. The newly independent States had soon realized that political decolonization could not lead to real independence without economic decolonization, whence the new international economic order, and without cultural decolonization, whence the new international information order. The latter derived from the consideration that information and communication flows were imbalanced and discriminatory toward the developing countries, and that that situation should be changed. There was not necessarily a contradiction between the claim for a better dissemination of information and respect for the cultural identity of peoples: the task - and it was a complex one - was to harmonize the two principles by regulating information for international dissemination. The new international economic order and the new world information order had the common aim of redistributing global economic wealth.

52. The transfer of technology was one aspect of the establishment of the new world order, one of the guiding principles of which was that information had the power to liberate the developing world from colonization and inequality. Unless the developing countries, however, took part in the current information revolution on a par with the developed countries, the effects of that revolution would be to magnify the differences between rich and poor nations. The developing countries were concerned that the new information industry would help to perpetuate the domination to which they were subject in the world economy: they would be supplying cheap raw data to make highly priced processed information. The flow of information within and among States was not yet free; it was controlled by powerful interests which could afford the necessary technology. There was a risk that political institutions would not be able to keep up with the pace of technological progress; governments might struggle to control the flow of information across

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(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

their borders, only to see their efforts rendered futile by satellite technology. One way of safeguarding the interests of the developing countries and allowing a two-way flow of information instead of a one-way flow from North to South, as was currently the case, would be the launching of a United Nations communication satellite. It was also important to monitor the behaviour of transnational corporations, to prevent the free flow of information from turning into economic protectionism.

53. The current international system of news reporting was dominated by giant news agencies. While those agencies were circulating about 7 million words daily, many third world countries did not even possess a national news agency and only a few of them produced as much as 10,000 words per day. There was obviously a one-sided flow of information from the metropolitan centres to the peripheries - or from centre to centre. That meant that the sole criterion for selecting a piece of news was often its economic value for those centres. As long as the flow of information remained a reflection of international power structures, the phrase "free exchange of ideas" signified no more than a political imperative. The international community should endeavour to redress all those imbalances.

54. Through its International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), UNESCO provided the developing countries, without threatening their fundamental human rights, with the funding and technical advice they needed to improve their communication networks and thereby become less dependent on the news agencies of developed countries. It also provided the best legal and political solution to the current imbalance in international communication, which the Department of Public Information was also endeavouring to reduce. The report of the Committee on Information (A/39/21) and the recommendations it contained, together with the report of the Secretary-General (A/39/479) which portrayed the aspirations of the developing countries, defined the parameters for DPI in the promotion of the new international information order. The achievements of DPI in that direction were praiseworthy, but certainly far from perfect.

55. Collective self-reliance was an essential component in the struggle of the developing countries to promote the new information order. The African and Arab countries, for their part, were endeavouring to bring it about through the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool, through the establishment of a communication and information network as called for by the Cairo Conference of the Ministers of Information and Communication of the non-aligned countries in May 1984, and through the establishment of the Pan African News Agency and the proposed launching of ARABSAT. They were supported in that endeavour by IPDC, DPI, all the relevant United Nations agencies and above all by all those countries, East and West, which possessed the requisite knowledge and technology.

56. The second issue relevant to the new international information order, one of particular significance for the developing countries, was its relationship to international peace and understanding. At the dawn of a new social and economic order, the mass media and international communications would be an important element in the creation of a political climate accelerating or retarding détente,

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(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

disarmament and peace. The mass media provided knowledge not only about what was happening in the world but also about what societies were preparing for, peace or perhaps war. The existing system of mass communication, including advertising, was dominated by transnational activities. It should be replaced by a communication order better serving the real interests of mankind and contributing to the emergence of peace and international understanding. That required a democratization of the mass media at all levels. That concept was reflected today in a number of documents: the Final Act of the 1975 Helsinki Conference, the 1978 UNESCO Declaration on information and the 1984 Declaration of the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned States, held in Jakarta. A sense of community among all peoples and the prevention of the formation of an enemy image were goals which should not be considered unrealistic.

57. The third aspect of the new international information order which was of particular interest to developing countries involved its effects on individual and collective human rights - civil or political rights in the liberal tradition, economic, social and cultural rights created by decolonization, and the national rights of peoples or States: the right to self-determination, development, information, and cultural identity and integrity. The exercise of those rights was intended to complete the process started by self-determination: in other words, the right to information and communication must be considered as a right of developing countries vis-à-vis the developed countries, a sort of international obligation aimed at permitting the former to become fully integrated in the communication community on an equal footing with the latter.

58. It was precisely because the new international information order was related to such collective human rights as the right of peoples to self-determination, development and peace that the developing countries could not be accused of politicizing information when they established a relationship, which they considered organic and basic, between the activities of the Department of Public Information - and of the United Nations in general - and issues relating to national liberation movements and the struggle for self-determination. At a time of new discoveries and new truths, institutions must, as Thomas Jefferson said, keep pace with the times. The knowledge of what was available and the hope of what was possible should make it possible to determine the role that the new international information and communication order would play for future generations.

59. Mr. DUARTE COSTA (Portugal) said that he agreed with those representatives who had mentioned the usefulness for the Committee's discussions of the statements made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, the Chairman of the Committee on Information and the representative of UNESCO. Information and communication played a key role both in the process of the integration of groups, at the collective level, and in the full development of the individual. That role was all the more important today because of two things, political and scientific, that had profoundly changed the structures of the modern world: decolonization, with the appearance on the international scene of new States anxious to reduce the gap between themselves and the developed countries, and the technological revolution, which had resulted in enormous advances in space, audio-visual and information technology.

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(Mr. Duarte Costa, Portugal)

60. Those two developments had made the modern world more interdependent, despite the diversity of peoples, the difference in cultural identities and opposing political systems. They had also led to an awareness of the need to establish a new world information and communication order so as to reduce injustices and imbalances. Since that order could come about only with the active participation of the entire international community, the United Nations system seemed to be the most appropriate framework for considering the question. Thus UNESCO, particularly through the International Programme for the Development of Communication, and the United Nations, through the Committee on Information, had an important role to play in that area. However, given the magnitude and complexity of the problem and the importance of the interests at stake, patience and time were needed for progress towards the desired new order.

61. Despite some partial results, it had to be acknowledged that not enough had been achieved. It would, however, be wrong to put all the blame, as some delegations had done, on the Western countries, which, according to those delegations, were anxious to retain their privileges. The lack of significant progress should rather be attributed to the substitution of confrontation for dialogue. It must also be frankly admitted that the establishment of a new information order was being delayed by its own ambiguities. The new order could not be defined in negative terms i.e., as being against certain values or as a condemnation of certain types of conduct. It must be based on the principles established in 1980 by the General Conference of UNESCO, on the freedom of information, the independence of the mass media, the plurality of sources and the free circulation of information. Freedom of opinion and free expression, which were inherent in those principles, were the fundamental rights of the citizen, legally recognized for two centuries and enshrined in the Charter. States had the duty to establish the institutional framework capable of ensuring those freedoms and embodying the legitimate aspirations of peoples to participate in the communication process. That was a matter to which Portuguese public opinion was extremely sensitive, and with regard to which his delegation wished to remove any uncertainty. However, those principles could not alone determine the emergence of a new information order, which must not, moreover, be reduced to a quantitative rebalancing of the volume of information moving in a two-way flow between North and South. In particular, it was essential not to lose sight of the importance of respect for the cultural identity of each society.

62. Despite the achievements of the United Nations, there was a danger that its public image might be eroded. His delegation had nevertheless been surprised at how vigorously the Western information media had been rebuked, either because of the insufficient attention they paid to the activities of the Organization or because of their unfair criticisms. As far as the Portuguese media were concerned, such accusations were baseless, since they, while not indiscriminately praising the work of the Organization, gave it the support, co-operation and objective coverage it deserved.

63. However, thought should be given to the reasons behind the unfavourable assessments of the Organization. Possibly they were due to the gap between the

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principles set forth in the Charter - which all States had pledged themselves to respect - and the practice of some States. Another reason might be that too much had been expected from the United Nations system. As a result of General Assembly resolutions, the tasks of the Department of Public Information had been expanded, but his delegation felt that its main aim should continue to be to improve the image of the United Nations. It wished to express its satisfaction at the results achieved by the Department in that area.

64. His delegation had participated constructively in the work of the Committee on Information and in the long and often difficult negotiations that had made it possible to reach an agreement and to adopt without a vote the set of recommendations contained in the Committee's report. That had been possible only because of the spirit of understanding and co-operation that had prevailed within the Committee and which, it was to be hoped, could in turn lead to the adoption without a vote of a draft resolution on the Committee's work.

65. The CHAIRMAN said that in view of the number of speakers wishing to make statements under item 74, it might prove necessary to convene a night meeting. Since the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General had requested that, as far as possible, night meetings should be avoided because of their financial implications, it was to be hoped that the list of speakers could be adjusted accordingly.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.