

United Nations
**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**
THIRTY-NINTH SESSION
*Official Records**



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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
27th meeting
held on
Friday, 9 November 1984
at 3 p.m.
New York

DEC 18 1984

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 27th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. JANNUZZI (Italy)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/39/SR.27
15 November 1984

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.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, Add.1 and Corr.1 and Add.2, A/39/602)

1. Mr. ABOUCHAER (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation supported all of the recommendations submitted by the Committee on Information to the General Assembly. The adoption of those recommendations without a vote had demonstrated the possibility of reaching agreement whenever there was the political will to do so. Unfortunately, certain Western States had prevented the Committee on Information from reaching consensus on a number of important issues, such as the request made to the Department of Public Information (DPI) to give adequate coverage to Israeli practices affecting human rights in the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories. Those States sought to hinder any development of United Nations information activities which might present a threat to the information monopoly exercised by the Western media so that they could continue to provide public opinion in developing and developed countries alike with distorted information. It was absurd that those States should object to some important recommendations on the grounds that they involved political issues, while permitting themselves to introduce purely political issues into other recommendations. Their goal had been to prevent the recommendations from dealing with issues of particular importance to the developing countries such as Palestine and Namibia, zionism and apartheid, and the struggle of national liberation movements for independence and self-determination. The technical aspects of production, distribution and marketing were necessarily bound up with the issues that made up the substance of information, were affected by them and interacted with them in a way that influenced international relations both positively and negatively. It was therefore not possible to separate politics from information when speaking of issues of interest to the entire international community.

2. His delegation wished to express its full support for the positions expressed by the delegations of the developing countries, as reflected in the report of the Committee on Information, its dissatisfaction with the present information order based on domination of the flow of news and information by the Western news agencies, and its condemnation of the abuse of the information media for purposes of distortion and mockery and the imposition of information black-outs.

3. The desire of the developing countries to establish a new world information and communication order reflected their concern for international peace and security and their aspirations for development and the improvement of the living

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(Mr. Abouchaer, Syrian Arab Republic)

conditions of their peoples. The developing world had already done much to promote the establishment of the new order and was prepared to confront the many difficulties that lay ahead before success was achieved. Unfortunately, certain Western elements, particularly the United States of America, still declined to participate in and co-operate with the international efforts for the establishment of the new order. They had even launched an information war against the United Nations and against UNESCO in an atmosphere of overt and covert pressure and of threats to suspend its contributions and even its membership in an organization that reflected the concerns and aspirations of peoples. The information policies and practices of the Western media, both private and public, were responsible for a planned and organized campaign to mobilize support for a policy of aggression and confrontation and to prepare the way for intervention by making it seem that such intervention was imperative for the protection of their interests.

4. No matter how much the Western States, on the pretext of the freedom of the press, tried to disclaim responsibility for the activities of their information media, they would not be so happy to see those media destroying confidence among peoples, impinging upon their dignity, distorting their ideals and cultures and denying their fundamental rights if those practices were not an expression of their policies and carried out in implementation of their plans. His delegation considered that the use of information to attack the developing countries was not an exercise of the freedom of information or of the press, but a political position and a political choice. The declaration of war against national liberation movements, their characterization as terrorism and the attempt to depict their struggle as serving strategic interests in the context of international competition was not an exercise of the freedom of information but an intentional distortion. Open commitment to the racist expansionist régimes in South Africa and Israel, blatant partiality, the distortion of facts, selectivity in the conveying of news, and concealing the truth did not reflect the exercise of the freedom of information but a political choice. The various Zionist and racist pressure groups in the Western States had a destructive influence on the mass media, making a myth of the freedom of information and holding the information media in thrall to the service of their goals.

5. His country believed that the establishment of a new world information and communication order was basic and complementary to the new international economic order and was an integral part of the international development process and a pre-condition for putting an end to the dependent status of the developing countries in the information and communication field. His delegation stressed the need to implement the recommendations relating to information contained in United Nations resolutions as a basic step in promoting the establishment of the new order. It also stressed the importance of increased co-operation among developing countries in the regional exchange of news and the need to develop information and communication infrastructures.

6. UNESCO played a major role in the establishment of the new order, and the formulation of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) was an important step towards its establishment.

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(Mr. Abouchaer, Syrian Arab Republic)

Co-operation between the United Nations Secretariat and that of UNESCO was excellent. His delegation would like to express its appreciation for the efforts made by UNESCO to assist the Arab States Broadcasting Union in studying tariffs envisaged for its ARABSAT satellite and for its contribution to exploring new communication approaches and systems in the Arab region.

7. His delegation, together with the delegations of all developing countries, accorded extreme importance to the subject of the equitable geographical distribution of posts in DPI. It believed that, because of the special nature of the functions of DPI and in view of the present situation with respect to the training of personnel in the Department, it could no longer wait for the question of equitable geographical representation to be settled at the level of the Secretariat as a whole. While the statistics presented showed a certain progress, their general character did not reflect the actual situation in certain departments where Western domination remained evident. Accordingly, his delegation requested the Secretariat to take the necessary steps to rectify that unjust situation in favour of the developing countries.

8. In order for DPI to perform the important tasks entrusted to it, it must be restructured so as better to respond to the needs of the new world order. One of the first priorities was that the developing countries should be given an appropriate place in determining United Nations information policies.

9. The Middle East/Arabic Unit had been producing radio and television programmes for about 20 years to the satisfaction of the authorities which it served, including the Directorate-General of Broadcasting and Television in his own country. Although the General Assembly had approved all the recommendations of the Committee on Information annexed to its resolution 38/82 B, including the recommendation to strengthen and expand the Middle East/Arabic Unit, that recommendation had remained unimplemented. Rather than maintaining the functions of the Unit as the producer of Arabic television and radio programmes and expanding a unit that served more than 22 States, DPI had, without justification, resorted to dismembering its television programmes. The Unit had formerly produced a television programme of 20 minutes in duration which had included discussions, interviews, review and comment and whose content had not been affected by the time factor. That had been replaced by a news programme of no more than five minutes containing news which reached users several days after it had been disseminated by news agencies and television stations.

10. His delegation was astonished at the feeble excuses in which DPI had taken refuge. It had stated that the Unit did not merit expansion, without giving any rational reason, and that there were no guidelines defining the meaning of the words "strengthen" and "expand" occurring in recommendation 27. DPI had apparently had no difficulty in interpreting the words "maintain" and "enhance" in connection with the European Unit in the Radio Service in recommendation 28. That unacceptable situation had made an adverse impression on Syrian and other broadcasting and television authorities, and his delegation felt obliged to request its correction. In the understanding of his delegation, the word "strengthen"

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(Mr. Abouchaer, Syrian Arab Republic)

meant that the Middle East/Arabic Unit should once again be enabled to produce the television programmes that it had produced in the past and that it had been prevented from continuing with under a variety of pretexts. Again, in the understanding of his delegation, the word "expand" meant the assignment of the staff members appointed by DPI to the production of television programmes in the Unit, so that it might be able to expand its programmes and once again produce programmes befitting the United Nations.

11. Mr. IRTEMCELİK (Turkey) emphasized the important role of information and communications in promoting greater understanding throughout the world. His delegation attached great importance to freedom of information, which was a basic human right. The free flow of information, both within and among States, was an essential factor in the progressive democratization of relations at the national and international levels. In that regard, he stressed the need to eliminate half-truths and deliberate fabrications which were disseminated under the guise of information. Slandorous disinformation and subversive propaganda campaigns conducted by State-controlled media ran counter to efforts to promote mutual trust and understanding. It should be borne in mind, however, that such propaganda broadcasts were by no means the monopoly of one State or particular group of States. In that regard, he stressed the right of all countries to protect themselves against subversive propaganda and the abuse of information.

12. Turkey supported the efforts to establish a new international information and communication order and felt that technologically advanced countries should spare no effort in expanding the capabilities of the developing countries in the field of information. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the International Programme for the Development of Communication under the auspices of UNESCO and the efforts of the non-aligned countries to co-operate in that regard.

13. He stressed the need for mutual good will and an issue-oriented dialogue between the developed and developing countries in establishing a new world information and communication order. Concrete results could be achieved only on the basis of co-operation. Confrontation and sterile polemics should be avoided.

14. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the work of the Department for Public Information, particularly in view of its limited financial resources. It was hoped that the recommendations of the Committee on Information would be adopted without a vote. Turkey attached particular importance to the speedy implementation of recommendation 42, whereby DPI would promote an informed understanding of the work of the United Nations in the area of terrorism and the protection of diplomats.

15. Ms. GUARDIA (Venezuela) stressed the need to improve the image and credibility of the Organization through the communication media. All countries should co-operate in order to promote a positive image of the United Nations and its role in solving world problems. Venezuela supported the efforts to establish a new world information and communication order in order to improve international understanding and strengthen international peace and security. She expressed concern at the growing gap between developed and developing countries in the field

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(Ms. Guardia, Venezuela)

of information and communications and emphasized the need to promote a greater awareness of the economic, social and political problems of the third world. It was essential to reduce the dependent status of developing countries in the field of information and promote the democratization of information by ensuring free access to sources of information without infringing the sovereignty of State.

16. The concentration of information and communication technology in a small group of countries was cause for concern. Venezuela was opposed to the monopolization of information by Governments and transnational corporations. Her country would continue to support the position of the Group of 77 in defence of the right of peoples to obtain and disseminate information in accordance with their own needs and interests in order to overcome the imbalance in the field of information.

17. She expressed satisfaction at the work carried out by the Department of Public Information and hoped that DPI would continue its efforts to make more rational and effective use of its resources. She stressed the need to strengthen the United Nations information centres and improve co-operation between the centres and the host countries. Venezuela attached particular importance to co-operation between the Department and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies.

18. Her delegation supported the activities of UNESCO under the International Programme for the Development of Communication. In spite of the difficulties which it encountered, Venezuela would continue to contribute to IPDC because of its firm belief that such programmes promoted the establishment of a new world information and communication order. Her Government fully supported the establishment of the Latin American Special Information Services Agency (ALASEI), which was an example of regional co-operation aimed at achieving the objectives of the new world information and communication order.

19. The results of the work of the Committee on Information were positive. Her delegation supported the proposal made by the delegation of Mexico to increase the number of members of that Committee from 67 to 69. It hoped that the recommendations of the Committee of Information would be adopted and speedily implemented. On the basis of its commitment to the Charter of the United Nations and democratic values, Venezuela would host an international forum on human rights in 1985.

20. Mr. BULBULIA (Barbados) stressed his Government's strong commitment to freedom of opinion and expression, which included the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through all media, regardless of frontiers. In view of recent technological advances, however, the current situation in the field of information and communications was unfavourable to the vast majority of developing countries, whose efforts to play a greater role in global communications were impeded by limited resources. For that reason, a new world information and communication order must be part of a new international economic and social order.

21. The developed countries must understand the needs of the developing countries and promote a dynamic two-way flow of information. The developing countries

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(Mr. Bulbulia, Barbados)

required assistance in expanding their choice of source materials, more training in the field of information and communication, and greater access to new technology in that field. Economic growth and stability were the basis for a new world information and communication order. The rich countries had to make the necessary resources available to the poor countries.

22. His delegation fully supported the recommendations contained in the report of the Committee on Information (A/39/21) and the appeal to all countries and the United Nations system as a whole to co-operate in the establishment of a new world information and communication order as an essential prerequisite for the strengthening of international peace and understanding. Barbados supported the strengthening of the activities of the Department of Public Information, particularly in such priority areas as international peace and security, disarmament, peace-keeping, the struggle against apartheid, the integration of women in the struggle for peace and development, and the establishment of a new international economic order. His delegation looked forward to the review to be undertaken by DPI pursuant to recommendation 52. DPI should investigate the current practice whereby video tapes of statements before the General Assembly cost more if they were made after 6 p.m.

23. Barbados also supported the efforts to set up new United Nations information centres in as many areas as practicable in order to promote the wider dissemination of information regarding the activities of the Organization. His delegation fully supported the renewal of the mandate of the Committee on Information so that it could continue to contribute to the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

24. The Caribbean Unit in the Radio Service of DPI had contributed significantly to efforts to promote a better understanding of the ideals and activities of the Organization. Many people in the subregion, however, could not be reached because the information was not disseminated in their native languages. His country, therefore, fully supported the proposal to expand the output of the Caribbean Unit in order to provide programmes in two main language combinations: French/Creole and Dutch/Papiamentu.

25. His delegation noted with satisfaction the various activities carried out by UNESCO under IPDC. He expressed appreciation for the assistance provided to the Caribbean News Agency through the installation of a modern computerized system under a project with the Federal Republic of Germany. His country followed with interest the joint UNESCO/ITU activities dealing with the socio-cultural impact of new communication technologies. Barbados fully supported the efforts of the Joint Inspection Unit and ACABQ to further rationalize the policy of the United Nations with regard to publications so that the maximum benefit could be achieved within the limits of available resources. Lastly, he expressed the hope that the Committee would be able to reach agreement by consensus on appropriate resolutions to be submitted for adoption by the General Assembly.

26. Mr. ALMOSLECHNER (Austria) noted with satisfaction the introductory statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, which demonstrated the

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(Mr. Almoslechner, Austria)

formidable task confronting DPI in view of the different views of Member States on information policies, the increased demands placed on the Department, and the need to achieve the greatest possible cost-effectiveness. DPI was accomplishing its difficult but important task in a most remarkable manner. The efforts to bring about greater efficiency and effectiveness in its work should be continued. His delegation would welcome greater coverage by DPI of economic and social issues and fully shared the views expressed in the joint statement of the 10 States members of the European Community in that regard. Equal coverage, however, should be given to political issues.

27. His Government favoured the strengthening and streamlining of the network of United Nations information centres and expressed satisfaction that the United Nations information centre in Vienna had begun operations. It was hoped that the question of the appointment of the director of the Centre in Vienna would be resolved through co-operation between DPI and the Department of Administration and Management.

28. Austria appreciated the spirit of co-operation shown by the members of the Committee on Information in reaching agreement on the recommendations of the Committee. Although developing countries were currently in a better position to disseminate information, much remained to be done, particularly in the third world, in order to bring about a more equitable flow of information. Austria supported the justified aspirations of developing countries in that regard and stressed the need to gain greater knowledge of the cultural heritage and everyday life in those countries. His delegation fully supported the view that the establishment of a new world information and communication order should be based, inter alia, on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and free access to information. Austria was entirely committed to the ideals of freedom of information and the belief that a new information order must be firmly based on those values.

29. With regard to the contribution of DPI to the establishment of a new world information and communication order, he hoped that the Department could make more resources available for the training programmes for journalists and broadcasters from developing countries. The implementation of IPDC by UNESCO was an important step in improving the communication capabilities of developing countries. On the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, a special effort should be made to promote a greater awareness of its achievements. DPI had a central role to play in that regard, and his delegation pledged its full support in those endeavours.

30. Miss GERVAIS (Canada) said that her country, whose development had been inextricably bound up with the establishment of a communications network covering its vast territory and linking it with the rest of the world, had always accorded the highest priority to the free and balanced dissemination of information.

31. Her delegation had been encouraged by the efforts made to limit the financial implications of the recommendations adopted by the Committee on Information. The

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(Miss Gervais, Canada)

time was ripe for further improvements in the management of the Department of Public Information so as to make optimum use of limited human and financial resources. Members of the Committee were called upon to exercise a sense of priorities in order not to overload DPI with less important requests which exhausted resources at the expense of more important programmes.

32. Since the image of the Organization had often been tarnished by the difficulties it had faced in trying to resolve complex political conflicts, DPI had a key role to play. It was essential for it to promote better understanding between Member States and to interest the media in the economic and social achievements of the Organization in order to rebuild the unreserved support of international public opinion and persuade Governments to show the political will necessary for multilateralism. DPI should not be an organ charged principally with conducting publicity for the United Nations, but with ensuring a balanced dissemination of information about its activities and those of the specialized agencies. Her delegation strongly supported the recommendations of the Committee on Information in that area.

33. The Committee on Information had a dual mandate; to review and strengthen the policies and activities of DPI and to take an overview of all questions and activities relating to information throughout the United Nations system. It was agreed that the new world information and communication order examined by that Committee in recent years must be based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information. Her country had been encouraged by the constructive spirit in which discussions on the necessary improvements to the functioning of UNESCO had been conducted.

34. While, in an era of high technology, Governments had a right and even a responsibility to ensure that their countries had access to the technology necessary to meet the needs of their people, basic human rights and liberties must also be respected. One of the guiding principles of the Western democracies was that Governments must not exert control over the content of the information transmitted by the media. Although democratic Governments had a legitimate role to play in regulating the means of transmission used, it would not be in their own interests to hinder the free flow of information across national borders. It was sometimes a delicate matter to decide what action a Government should take to ensure the viability of the domestic information sector without jeopardizing the access of citizens to the wide variety of information originating from abroad. It was, however, a major task of Governments to ensure an adequate system of communications which encouraged both economic and cultural dynamism. In Canada, an independent State corporation ensured that high quality, uncensored information was disseminated throughout the country, even in the most remote regions. At the same time, the private sector also played a significant role. The best way of correcting information gaps in many countries was to take realistic measures appropriate to the specific needs of those countries.

35. Faced with the reality of its limited resources and limited capacity to deal with the numerous demands placed on it, the International Programme for the

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(Miss Gervais, Canada)

Development of Communication had correctly given emphasis to concrete projects rather than political and philosophical issues. Her country attached great importance to those programmes designed to build up basic communications infrastructure, especially for those rural populations most deprived of access to essential information and of the means of communicating with their Governments. IPDC deserved increased assistance from all members of UNESCO and of the United Nations.

36. Her country continued to help in the training of journalists from developing countries through a programme of visits administered by its Department of External Affairs. The Canadian International Development Agency also continued to contribute to the development of communications infrastructure in a number of developing countries.

37. Mr. RADENKOVIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that the question of information assumed special importance at a time when his delegation was convinced that the current information and communication order was one of the causes of that situation, since, despite technical advances, it deprived the majority of the planet's inhabitants of full, objective and impartial information about themselves and others. Lack of knowledge about others led to insecurity and fear and other ills of the age.

38. Each day saw new examples of subjective, prejudiced information which led to a further deterioration in international relations. Such a state of affairs had given rise to the notion of replacing the current monopolistic order with a new world information and communication order that would restore the balance between the developed and the developing countries. The efforts of the latter to that end had, however, been barren of result.

39. Freedom of information, based on fair access to information media, was fundamental to the new order. At the moment, the unfair distribution of information media was abused by those enjoying technical superiority, in pursuit of political and other monopolistic goals.

40. His delegation reaffirmed its support for UNESCO and for increased contributions to its International Programme for the Development of Communication, as well as for the activities of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, as expressed at the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries at New Delhi. At the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries held at Jakarta in January 1984, great importance had been attached to the need to change the bias in world information and communication flows against the non-aligned and the developing countries, whose indigenous information systems and infrastructures required more support and assistance from relevant United Nations agencies. The Conference had further expressed solidarity with UNESCO, and with its Secretary-General in particular, while condemning the pressures put on the organization. That position had been reiterated at the Meeting of Ministers and Heads of Delegations of the Non-Aligned Countries to the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly, held in October 1983.

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(Mr. Radenković, Yugoslavia)

41. The activities of the Committee on Information to a large degree complemented the work of UNESCO, but it was clear from the Committee's reports that the efforts of the Department of Public Information and of UNESCO were still far from having created a satisfactory situation in the field of information and communication. The developed countries continued to monopolize information, and the one-way flow of information continued to intensify. Despite certain successes achieved by the Programme for the Development of Communication, results remained meagre. The General Assembly should launch a further appeal to all Member States and to other organizations to help the Programme and should also give full support to UNESCO activities for the establishment of a new world information and communication order, at a time when that organization was being attacked and denigrated.

42. His delegation supported the recommendation on the convening of a round table on a new world information and communication order in 1985, in co-operation with UNESCO, and likewise all the recommendations of the Committee on Information for further co-operation with UNESCO in that area.

43. His delegation firmly supported the recommendations concerning co-operation between DPI and the Pool of Non-Aligned New Agencies. The necessary machinery should be established to enhance their effectiveness, in recommendation 25 (a). His delegation also supported the recommendation that the daily news dispatches of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies should be made available at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

44. Development Forum, was, in the view of his delegation, indispensable. The Secretary-General should make every effort to put it on a sound financial basis and to ensure its uninterrupted publication, drawing, if necessary, on the budget of the United Nations. The World Newspaper Supplement played a vital role in enhancing understanding between developed and developing countries and thus deserved financial assistance from all Member States and United Nations institutions. His delegation supported efforts to promote the United Nations information system by creating United Nations information centres at key locations.

45. Despite the global financial crisis, every effort should be made to carry out all the programmes and activities of DPI, a further reduction of which could not but harm the United Nations itself, on the eve of its fortieth anniversary and of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The commemoration of those significant dates was an opportunity to show the world the full extent of the activities, successes and problems of the Organization.

46. Ms. BRABCOVÁ (Czechoslovakia) said that the mass media bore a heavy burden of responsibility in the current dangerous world situation. Her delegation considered that the mass media must serve the cause of peace, détente and understanding among nations.

47. The mass media of Czechoslovakia were totally committed to work for those ends, considering it their duty to disseminate objective truth and never to

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(Ms. Brabcová, Czechoslovakia)

interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. Czechoslovakia opposed the use of the mass media for intensifying the arms race, spreading false or distorted information on world developments, praising capitalist consumer values or instigating national, racial or religious intolerance. Such activities were being pursued with the support of the Governments of imperialist States, which used their control over their mass media in a manner that ran counter to the interests of the world community. Under the cloak of a "free flow of information" those mass media slandered socialism in the developing countries and carried out subversion against the socialist countries. In that connection, she expressed once again, on behalf of the Czechoslovak Government, a strong protest against the unscrupulous activities of the radio stations "Radio Free Europe", "Radio Liberty" and "Radio Martí", operated by United States secret services, which interfered in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia and other socialist States. Responsibility for such activities lay fully with the Governments concerned.

48. The dominant position of imperialist information monopolies was illustrated by the fact that, despite the disparity in populations, the flow of information from advanced capitalist countries to the developing world greatly exceeded the flow in the opposite direction. The Western information monopolies had become a strong instrument for the political and economic oppression of the developing countries and an obstacle to their full liberation.

49. Most countries in the world were fully aware of the harmful impact of the Western imperialist monopoly of the mass media on the international climate and the free economic development of the world. That awareness had given rise to the demand for a new information and communication order based on just and democratic principles. In that connection, the Declaration of the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries, held at Jakarta in January 1984, was of particular importance. Czechoslovakia fully supported the efforts of the developing world to establish the new order, which it considered to be closely linked with the need to establish a new international economic order. A truly equitable and democratic international information structure must accord with the United Nations Charter and the 1978 UNESCO Declaration.

50. An international legal instrument governing international activities in the field of information should be drafted and adopted as soon as possible. The document should include provisions concerning the responsibility of States for objective reporting in their mass media; prohibition of war propaganda and of the misuse of information activities for psychological warfare or interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States; and the right of all States to disseminate information in their own territory and to defend themselves against hostile propaganda. Such an instrument, apart from giving developing countries greater access to international communication channels, would be favourable to the strengthening of peace, détente, disarmament, international co-operation and understanding among nations. Work along those lines might be considered at the joint meeting of DPI and UNESCO. Czechoslovakia supported the efforts of UNESCO to establish the new information and communication order, but those efforts had become a thorn in the flesh for some advanced capitalist States, notably the United States.

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(Ms. Brabcová, Czechoslovakia)

51. Czechoslovakia recognized the desirability of reaching consensus in the debate on the item under consideration. It could not, however, agree to the proposal made the previous day that the debate on items considered in the Committee on Information should not be reopened during the debate on the information item in the Special Political Committee. The effect of that proposal would be to limit the ability of the majority of Member States to express their views on that item.

52. Her delegation appreciated the positive achievements of the United Nations, in particular of DPI, in improving the international information situation but demanded that the underrepresentation of the socialist States of Eastern Europe in DPI should be remedied, on the principle of just geographical representation.

53. Preparations for the observance of the fortieth anniversary of the victory over fascism and the end of the Second World War and of the founding of the United Nations, offered Member States and the mass media an opportunity to strengthen world peace, intensify the struggle against colonialism and racism and publicize the goals and successes of the United Nations. DPI could make a contribution to those preparations by appropriate activities in United Nations information centres. It was also necessary to condemn the resurgence of neo-fascism and revanchism and of demands for changes in the post-war arrangement of Europe appearing in the capitalist press and in the broadcasts of certain capitalist States' radio and television stations.

54. In view of the increasing threat of nuclear war, DPI should give particular prominence to General Assembly resolution 38/75, which condemned the formulation and publicizing of doctrines and concepts intended to provide "legitimacy" for the first use of nuclear weapons and to justify the "admissibility" of unleashing nuclear war. The international situation required intensified efforts by the United Nations to improve the international mass media. That would be possible without increasing the DPI budget if all means were devoted to the crucial task of democratizing and decolonizing the international information and communication order. Czechoslovakia had always supported the unique and positive role of the United Nations in all spheres, including information. The Czechoslovak Government and mass media would continue to disseminate true information about the United Nations and to promote its lofty aims.

55. Mr. TAHINDRO (Madagascar) observed that information was particularly important in the modern world as a means of promoting social integration and motivation and facilitating public dialogue, education and mutual understanding between different cultures, functions which the President of Madagascar had discussed in the Charter of the Malagasy Socialist Revolution. Moreover, for the public authorities, information played an essential role in the political, economic and social fields.

56. While every State could lay down specific objectives for its own information system, it could by no means control the content of the information disseminated from other States, a problem which could be particularly detrimental to the developing countries. Because of their different historical background and economic and social tradition, they could not just passively receive the

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(Mr. Tahindro, Madagascar)

information which the developed countries conceived and disseminated in the name of freedom of information, without endangering their own political, economic and social priorities. Ideally, information from the outside should be filtered in some way, although interdependence made such measures difficult. However, interdependence between States of different economic levels clearly benefited those at the higher level.

57. The new world information and communication order had been proposed with a view to remedying the unbalanced flow of information and improving understanding of the questions concerning the third world, which included not only disasters and coups d'état but also diligent efforts to achieve development and economic independence. He stressed that the developing countries were not opposed to freedom of the press, provided that it was accompanied by a responsible and honest attitude towards the truth and that it respected the national sovereignty of the countries concerned.

58. It was necessary to achieve the genuine psychological decolonization of those who possessed the mass media so as to ensure that a realistic picture was presented of life and people in the third world. In that connection, he drew attention to the appeal to the media issued at the end of the Conference of Ministers of Information of the Non-Aligned Countries, held at Jakarta in January 1984.

59. In conclusion, he indicated that many of the activities carried out by the Department of Public Information deserved the support of all Member States.

60. Mr. LASARTE (Uruguay) drew attention to the imbalance in the distribution and benefits of technological progress in the field of information, which reflected the economic, social and financial gap between different countries. That situation had given rise to the debate on a new world information and communication order and on the need to improve the national communications infrastructures of the developing countries. The international community's recognition of those needs was reflected in the establishment of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication and in practical projects carried out in the field.

61. Referring to the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/39/497), and in particular the paragraphs concerning the new world order, IPDC and specific projects, he drew attention to the fact that UNESCO had been examining most of the topics mentioned for 10 years, and he therefore agreed with the Director-General that efforts to establish a new world information and communication order were still in the exploratory phase. While there was consensus on the need for a new world order, the positions of individual countries varied widely, as was clear from the report of the Committee on Information (see A/39/21, paras. 30-35). As a result, the debate on the new world order could at any moment degenerate into a mechanical exercise aimed at scoring tactical, ideological or political points or could become so general as to be inapplicable.

62. His delegation agreed with the comments made by the representative of the Philippines at the Committee's 25th meeting to the effect that all individuals,

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(Mr. Lasarte, Uruguay)

groups and nations had a right to communication. However, efforts to put that concept into practice would never go beyond the exploratory phase, unless delegations overcame their differences.

63. Referring to the International Programme for the Development of Communication, he welcomed the interregional and regional projects for which funding had been approved and the measures directed towards decentralizing the administration of projects in the field with a view to improving their effectiveness and adapting them to local needs. He also expressed interest in the efforts to lower the telecommunications rates for the developing countries.

64. However, he expressed concern with regard to the little emphasis placed on the Latin American region in the allocation of regional and national projects and the lack of financing for a large number of the projects proposed by specialized agencies, developing countries and intergovernmental organizations.

65. In conclusion, he commended the work of DPI and observed that the recommendations of the Committee on Information should be used as a basis for reaching consensus in the current discussion, without prejudice to any additional proposals which might be made in that context.

66. Mr. SINGH (Nepal) said that the new world information and communication order had become the aspiration of the developing countries, in their endeavour to achieve the lofty goals of the United Nations and to ensure wider and more impartial coverage of their economic, social and cultural activities.

67. While the developing countries wanted to share with the developed countries the spectacular progress made in the field of information, they had little access to modern technology. Moreover, because of the unbalanced flow of information they gave the impression of merely repeating what they heard from the media of the developed countries.

68. Nevertheless, the information systems of the developed countries rendered valuable services, and the new world order should complement, not replace or compete with, the established information order. The concept of a new world order was not pro-West or pro-East but rather pro-United Nations and beneficial to the world as a whole. In that connection, he commended the work of UNESCO and expressed the hope that it would create a more equitable information situation. In addition, he welcomed the fact that the developed countries were willing to help the developing countries to reduce the existing imbalance by improving their information and communication capabilities.

69. His delegation also appreciated the activities of DPI, in particular the training of journalists and broadcasters from the developing countries and the Department's co-operation with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, and supported the continued publication of Development Forum. Moreover, the proposed daily short-wave radio programme would have no lack of listeners in the third world. While his delegation welcomed the broadcast of programmes in some of the important

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(Mr. Singh, Nepal)

Asiatic languages, his country needed broadcasts in Nepali, which was not only an official language in which the issues were debated in Nepal but was also spoken in some parts of north-eastern India, Bhutan and Burma. He therefore requested that the Secretary-General should give due consideration to its inclusion in the relevant broadcasts.

70. Although Nepal, a developing country, had limited human and technical resources, it had taken a number of steps to try to close the information gap through the development of internal and external communications links. Accordingly, he appealed to DPI, to UNESCO and to other international agencies to provide assistance for its efforts to that end.

71. Nepal would continue to support any measure directed towards the establishment of a new, more just and more effective information order and endorsed the recommendations made by the Committee on Information.

72. Mrs. BENNANI (Morocco) said that, because of the recent remarkable increase in information and communication problems, there was a need for effective action by the United Nations for the establishment of a new world information and communication order based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information as an essential corollary to the new international economic order. The only means of reducing the gap between developed and developing countries was to encourage international co-operation. The international community must see to it that domination, dependence and inequality were replaced by relations based on the mutual interest and dignity of nations and peoples.

73. The concentration of communications technology and the means of communication in a small number of companies controlling two thirds of all news sources posed a grave threat to the balanced flow of information between developing and developed countries. The developing countries must combat that new form of foreign domination, which was harmful to their cultures, traditions and values. The time had come to go beyond discussion and to take more concrete action for the adoption of an international charter on information and communication more in keeping with the spirit of the times.

74. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserted that everyone had the right to freedom of opinion and expression, many Governments, on the pretext of wishing to protect their peoples from adverse influences, exercised a systematic control over the flow and content of information. Because of the great capacity of communication to influence the minds and conduct of individuals and peoples, it was the most powerful means of promoting the democratization of society. The policy of her country with regard to information was in keeping with its democratic choices. A large-scale press, covering the entire range of political opinion, had been developed through a liberal and tolerant system in which freedom of opinion and expression were guaranteed under the Constitution.

(Mrs. Bennani, Morocco)

75. With the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations, DPI should step up its activities to make the Organization better known and to ensure a more coherent dissemination of information concerning its principles, activities and priorities. It should also strive to improve the image and credibility of the United Nations. In the context of the World Disarmament Campaign, DPI had an important role to play in persuading States to slow down, if not to stop, the ruinous and suicidal arms race.

76. The intellectual independence of Development Forum should be preserved in order to enable it to continue to play the role of a world forum for objective and accurate information on the difficulties encountered by third world countries in their struggle for development.

77. Information activities would, to a large extent, determine the success of a number of important events in 1985, such as International Youth Year, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women and the Seventh United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.

78. Her delegation would like to pay tribute to the untiring efforts of UNESCO for peace and understanding among peoples through its assistance to information authorities and its promotion of the free flow of ideas.

79. Mr. FARMER (Australia), referring to arguments to the effect that the international media were biased against the United Nations and incapable of reporting objectively on its work, suggested that, instead of questioning the motives of the media, delegations should examine what actually happened at the United Nations, as the Secretary-General had proposed in his Report on the Work of the Organization. While the media would obviously report on the shortcomings of the United Nations, it was up to the Organization to ensure that its achievements received fair treatment as well.

80. In that connection, it was necessary to undertake a vigorous information programme covering the full range of the Organization's activities. Very real concerns - such as human rights, disaster relief, protection of refugees and peace-keeping - in which the United Nations had played a crucial role must not be overlooked. The United Nations could generate public support only if DPI provided a flow of balanced and objective information. The selective treatment of selected topics could breed only cynicism and indifference and an unhealthy perception of the Organization.

81. His delegation also supported the call for a proper evaluation of DPI activities and effective follow-up action with a view to determining audience response. The availability of resources and pragmatic regard for both costs and effectiveness were central issues in the question of the acquisition by the United Nations of its own communications satellite and short-wave radio network. Moreover, the arguments which alleged that some States were underrepresented in DPI seemed to propose that the principle of equitable geographical distribution should

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(Mr. Farmer, Australia)

be applied on a department-by-department basis, a system which would be neither workable nor desirable.

82. In keeping with its firm belief in the desirability of free, balanced and pluralistic communication, Australia had joined in the consensus reached on the concept of a new world information and communication order and he expressed the hope that the consensus which had marked the discussions in UNESCO would be maintained during the current session.

83. In response to comments about bias, trivialization and omissions in connection with the press, he pointed out that, as the people who lived in countries with a free press knew, the question of press responsibility was of constant concern. Those countries greatly valued their system, especially when it was denegated by the proponents of so-called objective reporting, which actually meant reporting officially sanctioned by the Government of the day or even written by it. He drew attention to the fact that many delegations, in their statements, referred to reports from newspapers, the vast majority of which came from the free press. The free press, which reported events and expressed views that might make some people or Governments uncomfortable, was, in fact, more credible than a controlled press.

84. Referring to the very interesting comments made by the representative of Malaysia at the Committee's 25th meeting, he stressed that in his opinion, the Malaysian Government had made practical, co-operative contributions to a vastly improved flow of information between countries. Similarly, Australia sought to respond to the wishes of the audience in the South Pacific region and to enlist the contributions of journalists from other countries in the area. The regional response suggested that those services performed a valuable function.

85. In addition, several programmes made provision for training and study visits in Australia and for the development of media-related skills. Australia also tried to respond to requests for assistance, for example through the provision of broadcasting and telecommunications facilities, with a view to enabling the countries of the region to portray events in their part of the world through their own eyes, as the representative of Malaysia had said.

86. Mr. OSHODI (Nigeria) said that modern communication technology had advanced so much that no corner of the earth was beyond its reach. If it was mishandled, the effects could be disastrous. Misinformation could kill peace and cause chaos within States and also on a world-wide scale. That was why his delegation felt that the establishment of a new world information and communication order was not only an important element in efforts to bring about a new world economic order but also a central function of development.

87. Until the developing countries were in a position to build the necessary technological infrastructure, the technologically advanced developed countries should present a balanced picture of events in the developing world. The careless or ill-advised dissemination of information might have a destabilizing effect on international peace and security. In that context, he appealed to the mass media

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(Mr. Oshodi, Nigeria)

of the world to observe the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

88. Over the years, the membership of the Committee on Information had grown, together with its mandate, testifying to the fact that the international community was increasingly identifying itself with the importance of information to world peace and security. It was the responsibility of all Members to improve the image of the United Nations. His delegation fully supported the requests made by the Governments of Benin and Poland for United Nations information centres to be established in their respective capitals and was pleased to learn of the interest expressed by the Governments of China and Mexico in becoming members of the Committee on Information.

89. His delegation viewed the achievements of the Committee on Information as commendable and endorsed all its recommendations.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.