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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee  
(Fourth Committee)**

**Summary record of the 9th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 16 October 2013, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Rafti (Vice-Chair) . . . . . (Cyprus)

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*In the absence of Mr. García González (El Salvador), Ms. Rafti (Cyprus), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 55: Questions relating to information**  
(A/68/21 and A/68/315)

1. **Mr. Silwamba** (Zambia), speaking as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report on its thirty-fifth session (A/68/21). During that Committee's general debate, members had focused on a wide range of issues, including the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and of the Department of Public Information as its public voice. Many speakers had welcomed the Department's growing use of new information and communication technologies. However, several speakers had cautioned that the digital technology gap between developed and developing countries remained a matter of concern, and one speaker had observed that certain developed countries, by taking advantage of modern technology, were continuously trying to distort facts and news with a view to engineering events and developments, especially those relating to developing countries.

2. Speakers had underlined their support for the promotion of press freedom and stressed the need to achieve linguistic parity in the work of the Department. In that connection, one speaker, representing a large group, had reiterated that group's suggestion that press releases should be provided in all official languages of the Organization. Speakers had commended the growing use of social media by the United Nations information centres and had emphasized that any decision pertaining to the reorganization of the centres must be made in consultation with host countries and take into account the geographical, linguistic and technological characteristics and needs of different regions. Speakers had also encouraged the Department of Public Information to continue to inform the world about the harsh plight of Palestinians living under occupation and had commended its outreach activities, particularly its work with civil society and academia.

3. The last chapter of the report included two draft resolutions on questions relating to information.

4. **Mr. Launsky-Tieffenthal** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, introduced the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information

(A/68/315) and said that, in his consultations with Member States, almost all had called for the products and services of the Department of Public Information to be made more accessible, including through multilingual coverage. Many Member States had called for enhanced cooperation between the Department and other United Nations bodies, and some had encouraged the Department to nurture its constituencies of engagement, inter alia, by establishing partnerships with the media, civil society and academia and enhancing its outreach to young people. In the light of those consultations, the Department was seeking to sharpen its focus, better define its target audiences and expand its product and service delivery.

5. The Department of Public Information sought to provide multilingual coverage of the work of the United Nations, using print, radio, television and the Internet, and to ensure a fine balance between new and traditional means of communication. It had provided a webcast of the general debate of the sixty-eighth General Assembly in the original language and the six official languages of the Organization, and it had launched a general debate webpage that provided links to audio files in all six official languages for all statements, in addition to the original language of the speaker. It had also established multilingual websites featuring material relating to the United Nations high-level meetings on disability, migration and nuclear disarmament. A multimedia presentation on the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers had been launched on the United Nations News Centre portal. Visitors to the site could hear interviews with Chinese peacekeepers in Liberia and learn about United Nations police officers' efforts to combat sexual violence in Darfur and the use of unmanned aerial vehicles in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Furthermore, in collaboration with the Spanish Translation Service of the Department of General Assembly and Conference Management, the Department of Public Information had launched a pilot project to produce press releases in Spanish during the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development.

6. Through a more active engagement with social media, the Organization had been able to increase its audience and enhance the impact of its traditional products, such as audio interviews, photos and news reports. The United Nations had, moreover, enhanced its accessibility to the public during the high-level

segment of the General Assembly, inter alia, by providing links to live broadcasts on key media platforms and social media websites. United Nations web pages and social media feeds were accessed millions of times every month.

7. The Department of Public Information was strongly committed to working with other United Nations entities. During the special event towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which had been organized by the President of the General Assembly, and related high-level events, the Department had participated in the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force to prepare a joint communications strategy, common messaging and visual materials and coordinate outreach. The Department also continued to work with partners from the Organization and beyond to engage new audiences in the drive to end extreme poverty. The United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe had collaborated with the Millennium Campaign office in Spain and other local partners to arrange for the Secretary-General to kick the opening ball at a Real Madrid football match. United Nations banners and videos on the stadium screens had accompanied the Secretary-General's opening kick, conveying a message to the millions watching the broadcast that urgent action was needed to achieve the MDGs. In September 2013, the Department had partnered with the Global Poverty Project to arrange for the Secretary-General to address the Global Citizen Festival, which had been held in Central Park, New York City. Introduced by Stevie Wonder, a United Nations Messenger of Peace, the Secretary-General had conveyed the MDG message to an audience of more than 60,000 people in the Park and to millions worldwide who were following on television or by live stream. Department of Public Information videos and infographics had also been shown at that concert.

8. For the sixth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Department of Public Information had collaborated with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to provide closed captioning for the webcast of that meeting and live international sign language interpretation. The Department had also worked closely with the Office of the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Mission of Kazakhstan to the United Nations and the Office for Disarmament Affairs in co-sponsoring an art exhibit

entitled *Peace Now: Abolish Nuclear Tests and Weapons* to mark the fourth International Day against Nuclear Tests, and help raise public awareness of the importance of banning nuclear weapons tests.

9. Interdepartmental collaboration was crucial in crises and in highlighting the Organization's impact on pertinent global issues. Accordingly, the Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Cairo was supporting the Office of the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria, while the Director of the Bogotá Information Centre and a Department of Public Information staff member from Headquarters had been assigned to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. The United Nations Information Centre in Ouagadougou had supported the mission to Mali by monitoring and analysing the media and disseminating key facts about the work of that mission and the Organization to the wider Sahel region in local languages. The Department of Public Information had worked with other United Nations agencies and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to provide communications support to the joint team deployed to Damascus, and the Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Beirut was supporting the team conducting additional investigations on the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Department was also providing support to the Secretary-General's initiative to disseminate United Nations best practices and enhance decision-making.

10. The Department was constantly striving to broaden the base of support for the Organization, and had established new alliances and partnerships to attract new and younger audiences. Over 1,000 schools of higher education and research in some 120 countries had become members of the United Nations Academic Impact initiative, which represented a global movement of minds committed to the exercise of intellectual social responsibility and the achievement of United Nations goals. The Academic Impact initiative supported, inter alia, the Institute of Rural Management in Pakistan, which had pioneered an accelerated learning programme to reintegrate children who had dropped out of school into mainstream education, and the Regent University College of Science and Technology in Ghana, which had renovated a school in Accra and equipped it with a laboratory. The Korean Association in support of the

United Nations Academic Impact initiative, which included 55 colleges and universities in the Republic of Korea, had held an international student conference to review progress towards the achievement of the MDGs and the prospect for a post-2015 development framework. The Department of Public Information had also developed an innovative online guide for participants in model United Nations conferences that detailed the structure, procedures, negotiation processes and skills needed to conduct a simulation that accurately captured the essence of United Nations meetings.

11. In August 2013, 150 secondary school students had taken part in a model General Assembly organized by the United Nations Information Centre in Windhoek and had debated how least developed countries could use communications and information technology to achieve sustainable development. The Vienna Information Centre, in collaboration with the United Nations Association of Austria, had facilitated a Model United Nations conference in Vienna in which 250 students had participated. United Nations information centres, moreover, played a critical role in raising awareness among local communities of the work of the Organization. In collaboration with MetroRio, the United Nations Information Centre in Rio de Janeiro had organized an exhibition entitled *The United Nations makes a difference* at a busy metro station in that city. That exhibition, which had been seen by thousands of people, had highlighted the work of the Organization in areas such as peacekeeping, combating poverty and hunger, maternal health, education, climate change and human rights. Furthermore, to raise awareness of the work of the Organization in areas that included gender-based violence, children's rights, xenophobia, green cities and HIV/AIDS, the Pretoria Information Centre had participated in an inner-city festival entitled *Feast of the Clowns*, which had been attended by over 5,000 participants, including civil servants, educators, students and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

12. The Department was also working with Member States, including members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Union, to raise awareness of slavery and had provided communications support for the announcement of the winning design for the permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The Department had also held meetings with high-level

delegations from the Sudan and from the Emirate of Sharjah to discuss ways to strengthen understanding of the Organization.

13. Mindful of the huge outreach possibilities offered by film and television, the Department was increasingly working with the creative community with a view to communicating with new constituencies. Through the Creative Community Outreach Initiative, which had been launched in 2009, the Department was collaborating with musicians, visual artists, poets and film and television producers, many of whom were deeply committed to addressing the burning issues on the Organization's agenda, with a view to integrating United Nations priority issues into their creative endeavours. As a result, the Organization had been able to communicate critical information to millions worldwide, raising awareness of, inter alia, children and armed conflict, combating malaria and promoting cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. Furthermore, by communicating the untold stories of United Nations staff and their experience in the field, the Department hoped to captivate audiences and put a human face on key issues of global importance.

14. *A film showing how the Department was reaching out to the creative community was projected.*

15. **Mr. Thomson** (Fiji), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information was crucial in order to identify the needs and priorities of Member States and their citizens regarding information on the United Nations. Notwithstanding the significant progress that had been achieved in the area of public information, many developing countries struggled to gain access to information on United Nations activities for want of resources and technical means. The Department of Public Information must therefore continue to make use of traditional radio and print media, which remained the primary means of communication in many of those countries, to disseminate the key messages and accomplishments of the Organization.

16. The Department should continue to work to reach the widest possible audience. Its initiatives on issues of great importance to the international community, including the question of Palestine, were laudable. It should continue its efforts to inform the public about the post-2015 development agenda and should also work with the Special Committee on decolonization to

raise awareness of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism.

17. The United Nations information centres were faced with the problems of ageing office equipment and lack of cost-effective access to adequate electronic systems. Offers from Member States of rent-free premises for the centres were welcome, but such support was not a substitute for full funding from the United Nations regular budget. The information centre in Luanda must be established at the earliest opportunity, and any decision on reorganizing the centres should be made in consultation with the host countries and in keeping with regional needs.

18. Despite the Department's efforts, the disparity in the use of the official languages on its website persisted and the issuance of daily press releases had not been expanded to all official languages. The Department was encouraged to find creative ways to achieve that objective, within existing resources. Lastly, the Group of 77 and China pledged to continue to support efforts to preserve the historical archives of the Organization and the large volume of material that was created on a daily basis.

19. **Mr. Sinhaseni** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the report of the Committee on Information (A/68/21) highlighted the importance of credible information, press freedom, outreach activities and the use of new technologies in addition to more traditional media. The Department of Public Information played a key role in making the voice of the United Nations heard, fostering understanding of the Organization's work and disseminating a message of peace. ASEAN commended, inter alia, the Department's efforts to raise public awareness of the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda and urged it to enhance its strategic communication services, news services and outreach and knowledge services, with a view to informing people around the world about developments that would affect their future. The Department also played a key role in fostering understanding of cultural diversity, promoting tolerance, and combating hate speech and, as partial truths and misinformation could have serious ramifications, must continue to pay particular attention to ensuring the accuracy of all information it reported.

20. Events held to commemorate the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers and the radio

workshop for United Nations peacekeeping missions in Africa had helped raise public awareness of United Nations activities, its successes and the challenges it faced. ASEAN encouraged the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support to continue their cooperation to that end and commended the reports produced by the United Nations News Centre highlighting efforts by peacekeepers to protect civilians and end violence against women and children. ASEAN also encouraged Member States to disseminate United Nations information in their national languages.

21. The growing use of new media and digital platforms presented exciting opportunities to reach more people, more quickly. However, in the light of the wide digital gap that remained between developed and developing countries, the Department of Public Information must also continue to provide information using television, radio and more traditional print media.

22. The ASEAN Information and Communications Technology Masterplan had been elaborated with a view to fostering regional awareness, bridging cultural gaps, and celebrating the diverse cultural heritages of the peoples of the region. New information technologies were also being used to facilitate cultural, art and sports exchanges, while scholarships and academic exchanges were helping to foster dialogue and understanding among the diverse cultures of the region. Thailand was promoting the use of information technology, striving to improve its e-government services and, on 18 November 2013, would host the International Telecommunication Union Connect Asia-Pacific Summit, which would provide a forum for an exchange of ideas on ways to address digital divides and enhance partnership.

23. **Mr. Charles** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community, commended the Department of Public Information for its efforts to foster understanding of the principles that guided the work of the United Nations, including development, human rights and the maintenance of international peace and security, as well as for its global activities to promote awareness of MDGs, the post-2015 development agenda and other key United Nations initiatives. The Department should continue to provide information in multiple media formats with a view to enhancing its accessibility and attracting the interest of the widest possible audience.

24. The Department of Public Information was constantly striving to ensure that online portals through which information on the work of the Organization could be accessed were user-friendly, interactive and updated regularly. It was a crucial partner in campaigns to promote healthy lifestyles and raise awareness of key global health issues. The Caribbean Community also commended the Department on its outreach initiatives with young people and on its efforts to ensure that information on the United Nations was made available in all six languages of the Organization.

25. The United Nations Information Centre in the Caribbean region had successfully publicized and promoted numerous United Nations campaigns, commemorations and observances and had provided media support in areas such as safeguarding the environment and combating violence against women and child sexual abuse. The Department of Public Information had, moreover, assisted admirably in the 2013 activities to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and had played a key role in the campaign to erect a permanent memorial to the victims of slavery.

26. **Ms. Riddy-O'Dowd** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, commended the continued efforts of the Department of Public Information to carry out its work and promote the ideals of the United Nations in a manner that was understandable and accessible to all.

27. The Department's integrated approach to its three subprogrammes was particularly welcome in the area of outreach, which should prioritize coverage of attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, implementation of the outcomes of the Rio Conference, and the preparation of the post-2015 development agenda. All stakeholders should be engaged through the use of appropriate media and languages, and efforts to ensure a consensus should be complemented by the United Nations information centres.

28. In the coming year the Department should promote awareness of climate change issues,

biodiversity, the concerns of small island developing States, and disarmament instruments. The Department had done a great deal to promote the elimination of racial discrimination and it should do similar work in other important human rights areas such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues and women's rights, where attention must not solely be focused on United Nations "days", but be ongoing. Freedom of the press, of information and of expression also required a constant commitment in the interest of ensuring better governance and helping to promote peace and development. In that regard the European Union urged all Member States to ensure that journalists could perform freely and effectively, and to redouble their efforts to put an end to the killing of journalists.

29. She welcomed the focus by the Department's News Centre on the tragedies unfolding in Syria, the Sahel and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as its efforts to promote awareness of the United Nations and the European Union's joint project in the field of natural resource management and conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

30. New technologies and social media were rapidly establishing themselves as the most important tools available to the Department to provide information about United Nations activities, in as many languages as possible. The Department should make greater use of on-line resources and social media to expand its outreach to non-governmental organizations in order to arrest what the European Union saw as the increasing exclusion of civil society from the work of the United Nations in a counterproductive contradiction of the fundamental values of the Organization.

31. Multilingualism was inherent in multilateralism and in promoting mutual understanding, thereby contributing to international peace and security. It also equated to transparency, accountability, ownership and sustainability of the Organization's activities; in that regard the live coverage of United Nations meetings in its six official languages was a positive development. She looked forward to the expanded provision, within existing resources, of multilingual access to information about the United Nations. In particular, she welcomed the draft resolution submitted to the Fourth Committee by the Committee on Information underlining the responsibility of the Secretariat in mainstreaming multilingualism into all its communication and information activities, within existing resources, which, if adopted, would give the

Department a clear mandate to take account of multilingualism when formulating its programmes and subprogrammes.

32. Lastly, she welcomed the establishment of the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations.

33. **Mr. Jaitley** (India) noted the central role played by the Department of Public Information in taking such issues of global importance as internationally agreed upon development goals to a world audience, and its work in highlighting the Millennium Development Goals and the post-2015 development agenda.

34. The United Nations information centres acted as an interface between the United Nations and local communities, thereby playing a noteworthy role in enhancing its public image. The centres should be further strengthened, particularly in developing countries, through the provision of adequate budgetary resources. The Department of Public Information should work closely with host countries in consultations on the development agenda.

35. There should be more local content in the production of the Department's material. Information centres, with their capacity to work in local languages, should deepen their collaboration with local communities to take the United Nations agenda to the grass-roots level.

36. The Department should continue to expand its partnership with institutions of higher education under the United Nations Academic Impact initiative. His delegation noted with satisfaction the number of colleges and universities worldwide, and in India in particular, that had cooperated in the initiative. India had always been a committed contributor to the Academic Impact initiative and, in the context of promoting intercultural dialogue, had collaborated with the Department of Public Information in organizing events as part of the "Unlearning intolerance" programme. His delegation also supported the Department's activities to highlight the work of United Nations peacekeepers. He welcomed the efforts to disseminate information in more languages, including Indian languages. Lastly, while it was important to capitalize on new information technology and social media to reach new audiences, it was also important in developing countries to use traditional means of communication such as radio and print.

37. **Mr. Alday González** (Mexico) said that it was only with timely, multilingual, objective and accurate information that the work of the United Nations could be better understood. He acknowledged the proactive work of the Department of Public Information to do more with less and supported its efforts to reach people through social networks. While such new technologies opened up a new channel to build support for United Nations initiatives, for millions of people traditional media were the only way to learn about the Organization's work. The digital divide was a source of concern, and Governments, in conjunction with the private sector, must make a determined effort to close it. Equal access to new technologies could boost prosperity and economic opportunity; his Government had adopted a number of constitutional amendments to strengthen freedom of expression and access to information and communication technologies.

38. Greater effort should be made to enhance multilingualism and achieve parity of all six official languages in all communications by the Organization; in particular, there should be more Spanish-language material. In that regard the initiative by Argentina, the Group of Friends of Spanish at the United Nations, was a follow-up to a request made by Mexico at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly for equal treatment for languages in the daily news and radio and television materials produced by the Organization. Equality was more important than economy, and the Organization should address the unequal treatment it gave to languages, especially in the light of the importance of Spanish in electronic media and throughout the world.

39. **Ms. Yeo** (Singapore), noting that countries that embraced information and communication technology experienced significant economic growth, said that everyone should have access to information and communication technologies as an enabler of social development and economic growth. The digital divide between the connected and the unconnected, mainly in the developing world, was a grave cause for concern, as the digital age had great potential as a social leveller and economic enhancer. The United Nations had a critical role to play in bridging that divide.

40. Her delegation supported the Department's proactive use of information and communication technologies and outreach strategies to tell the stories of the United Nations in print, on radio and television, and through social media.

41. Her Government, in conjunction with the private sector, was using social media to build a digitally inclusive nation. It had embarked on a 10-year master plan to increase the reach and richness of its electronic services and enhance electronic communications for the country's citizens, including empowerment of the elderly, needy and persons with disabilities, and outreach to those who did not have computers or Internet access.

42. **Mr. Pyvovarov** (Ukraine) said that there had been a significant increase in the quantity of information available globally and that managing it effectively in the context of the United Nations was a challenge. The availability of information was a prerequisite to overcoming the crises confronting the Organization.

43. Effective communication between the United Nations and the international community was very important in bringing the Organization's message to the public and making it accessible, thereby ensuring the success of its work. A well-coordinated public information strategy, including the use of social media to expand the target audience, was a key element in the overall effectiveness of United Nations activities, and he commended the Department on its exemplary efforts in that regard. He noted that the Department had worked to publicize information on the United Nations promptly and to provide media support in respect of its activities, which was greatly appreciated in Ukraine by academia and the public. He commended the excellent work done to host journalists during the opening week of the current session of the General Assembly.

44. United Nations peacekeeping operations deserved much fuller coverage to show how the Organization made a concrete contribution to world stability and to combat outdated views of ineffectiveness and outmoded methods. Missions recently established in Africa and the Syrian Arab Republic showed how the United Nations minimized the impact of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises and, as an active contributor to different peacekeeping operations, his Government would like the media to publicize and properly appreciate the efforts of the courageous men and women who risked their lives daily for peace. The Department must further diversify its work, following the initiatives undertaken by the Under-Secretary-General in collaborating with the international media, and should focus, through a series of documentaries, on the complexities and importance of peacekeeping.

45. Journalists, who sometimes risked their lives, must be free to report freely and impartially on world events in order to ensure the flow of information. Information was a powerful weapon that should be used solely to promote peace, democracy, prosperity and mutual respect and understanding.

46. **Mr. Orellana Zabalza** (Guatemala) said that his Government attached great importance to consideration of the Department's public information policies and activities, since that allowed Member States to assess the Organization's work and progress in the areas of information and outreach, the only way in which an unbiased and effective global information and communication system could be created.

47. While his delegation recognized the importance of new technologies and welcomed their use by the Department, it viewed with concern the digital divide that persisted between developing and developed countries. The fact that many developing countries did not have access to new technologies meant that traditional means of communication remained the only way to obtain information and must be preserved. Traditional media should also transmit information in as many languages as possible.

48. Nevertheless, the use of social media in all official languages must also be expanded. The Department should provide information on the comparative use of such media in the six official languages so as to ensure the most efficient use of resources. It was essential for there to be parity, and for the linguistic divide within the Organization to be closed. The fundamental principle of parity of official languages could not be limited to working languages. In that regard he noted the growing use of Spanish in the Organization's digital media and welcomed the formation of the Group of Friends of Spanish.

49. The equitable use of resources should reflect better the needs of the United Nations audience. The creative and efficient use of resources in the field of public information was more pressing than ever. His delegation regretted that press releases were not issued in all official languages, and further efforts should be made to provide them within existing resources.

50. He welcomed the close cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, and the outreach activities which helped



to increase understanding of peacekeeping missions, not least in troop-contributing countries.

51. **Mr. Yabo** (Israel) said that his delegation was grateful for the Department's tireless work in creating innovative educational programmes and establishing partnerships with Governments and civil society. The "Holocaust and the United Nations" outreach programme continued to raise awareness of youth's role in preventing ethnic and religious violence. Its eighth International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust had emphasized the dangers of hatred, racism and xenophobia and his Government was encouraged by the range of related activities around the world to help teachers reach out to students. Israel hoped that the programme would receive the necessary resources to be able to widen the scope of its activities.

52. His Government continued to support the Department's thematic functions, and had hosted an event highlighting autism for the fourth successive year. His Government had also made efforts to promote the spread of computer technology to close the digital gap for those of lesser means, and welcomed the Department's approach to new technologies and tools in order to reach global audiences and its constructive engagement with stakeholders.

53. Israel remained concerned about the special information programme on the question of Palestine, which had been created by a resolution that presented a biased narrative of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given the one-sided mandate that had established the programme, Israeli officials would neither attend nor participate in programme seminars until a more even-handed approach was adopted; but Israel was ready to engage in the formulation of a more constructive resolution to mandate future activities fostering peace education, tolerance, mutual understanding and the prevention of incitement.

54. **Mr. Diallo** (Senegal) said that the dual role of the Department, to disseminate information and to promote understanding among the peoples of the world, thereby fostering democracy, human rights, poverty alleviation and measures to combat discrimination, continued to effect positive change in the world through the 63 information centres, all of which had established partnerships with their host countries, civil society organizations, educational institutions and the press to raise awareness of the activities of the United Nations

in the political, economic and social spheres, employing local languages to that end. However, the Department should promote balance in the use of traditional media and new information and communication technologies until Africa could close the digital divide, a goal that would require the support of the continent's development partners.

55. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 65/311, the Department should deploy all the human and material resources necessary to fully satisfy the demands of Member States regarding multilingualism and linguistic parity in all its activities.

56. His Government supported the special information programme on the question of Palestine. The programme was especially important in the light of the precarious situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, which seriously affected the Palestinian population day by day. The programme was an important instrument in creating the necessary conditions for the enjoyment by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.

57. **Mr. Hamed** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that that his delegation looked forward to a more just and effective world information order that would address the concerns of all peoples. The Department of Public Information played an important role in ensuring that the United Nations message of peace was conveyed to the different regions of the world. Information was one of the most important tools at the international community's disposal, reflecting as it did the political, cultural and economic orientations of different societies. The revolution in modern communication media had so increased their impact that they no longer merely reported events but actually helped shape them. The negative role played by the media when they were not objective, however, could spread a culture of violence rather than of peace. It was critical that the United Nations should disseminate only information that was provided by objective and impartial sources with a view to ensuring that it was not politicized, distorted or fabricated. In that connection, the Syrian Arab Republic commended the numerous objective reports produced by certain media outlets on the events taking place in that country, particularly with regard to terrorist groups affiliated with al-Qaida, and remained gravely concerned that those groups continued to target and murder Syrian and foreign journalists.

58. The Department of Public Information must strengthen its special information programme on the question of Palestine, given Israel's ongoing human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territories, which included attacks against journalists and foreign peace activists. The Department must also achieve parity among the official languages of the United Nations and remedy the deficiencies of the Arabic-language website. Lastly, the Department could play an important role in encouraging dialogue and building understanding among cultures and peoples with a view to achieving such important goals as poverty eradication and decolonization.

59. **Ms. Tambunan** (Indonesia), recalling the mandate of the Committee on Information, said that freedom of the press should be protected in every way, and that every single person was entitled to information. In an era of social media and instant communication, the content of information and how to present it were crucial.

60. The Department of Public Information understood better than any other institution that the mass media could be messengers of peace and tolerance, or of misunderstanding and hatred. She welcomed the use by the Department of all available platforms to disseminate information and create global awareness of the work of the Organization. The Department should maintain its vital role in projecting peace and tolerance, combating prejudice and division, and eradicating stereotypes, while ensuring that each piece of information conveyed the intended message in a balanced way.

61. Regarding the question of Palestine, she acknowledged the work of the Department in informing the world of the efforts of the United Nations to achieve peace in the Middle East, including by organizing activities to mark the annual International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. She welcomed the joint work of the News Centre and of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); it was important to highlight the Agency's humanitarian work despite a challenging situation. Mindful of the need to receive information from the perspective of the Palestinians, she encouraged the Department to continue its training programme for Palestinian journalists.

62. As a troop-contributing country, Indonesia welcomed the ongoing cooperation between the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in publicizing the work of peacekeepers; it would enhance the public image of the United Nations and the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions.

63. United Nations information centres played an important role in taking the Organization's message to the most remote places. It was important to strengthen their cooperation with other United Nations entities at the country level as well as with Governments in order to avoid duplication.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*