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SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
Agenda item 79

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Malaysia*: draft resolution

The General Assembly,

Recalling its previous resolutions on questions relating to information,

Reaffirming the mandate given to the Committee on Information by the General Assembly in its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information, 1/

Also taking note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit 2/ and the conclusions and recommendations therein concerning the reorganization of the Department of Public Information, as well as the comments of the Secretary-General thereon, 3/

Encouraging the Secretary-General to continue necessary action in order to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, with particular emphasis on securing a co-ordinated approach to priority issues before the Organization,

* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77.

1/ A/44/653.

2/ A/44/433.

3/ A/44/433/Add.1.

97.

Taking note of the comprehensive report of the Committee on Information, 4/ which served as an important basis and stimulated further deliberations,

I

Information in the service of mankind

1. Urges the full implementation of the following recommendations:

(1) All countries, the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned should, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and adhering to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, co-operate and interact in responding to the call for the establishment of a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process, aimed at eliminating the existing imbalances between developed and developing countries in the field of information and communication, at reducing existing disparities in information flows at the international as well as the national level and at improving the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries in order to increase their participation in the communication process, based on the free flow and wider and better balanced dissemination of information as well as on the meaningful and equal participation of all countries in the field of information and communication, ensuring the diversity of sources of and free access to information and intended to advance the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples through all means of mass communication as an important contribution towards strengthening international peace and understanding. The central role of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in this regard, in line with that organization's strategies, should be reaffirmed;

(2) Fully aware of the important role that the media world-wide can freely play, the mass media should be encouraged to give wider and objective coverage to the efforts of the international community towards global development and, in particular, the efforts of the developing countries to achieve economic, social and cultural progress;

(3) All countries are urged to assure to journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks; all physical attacks against them should be resolutely condemned;

(4) Aware of the existing imbalances in the international distribution of news, particularly that affecting the developing countries, it is recommended that urgent attention should be given to the elimination of existing inequalities and the reduction of existing disparities in information

4/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/44/21).

flows at the international as well as the national level, to the encouragement of the free flow and the promotion of wider and better balanced dissemination of information, without any obstacle to freedom of expression, and to the advancement of mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples through the diversification of sources of information, respecting the interests, aspirations and socio-cultural values of all peoples;

(5) The United Nations system as a whole, particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the developed countries should be urged to co-operate in a concerted manner with the developing countries and their media, public, private and other, with a view to strengthening the information and communication infrastructure in the latter countries and promoting their access to advanced communication technology, in accordance with their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by the developing countries, so as to enable them and their media to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and in the light of their social and cultural values, adhering to the principle of freedom of information and freedom of the press. In this regard, support should be provided for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries;

(6) Regional efforts and co-operation among developing countries as well as co-operation between developed and developing countries to strengthen communication capacities and further develop the media infrastructure in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information, should be enhanced so as to encourage the free flow and promote wider and better balanced dissemination of information;

(7) The United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, in addition to bilateral co-operation, should aim at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and their media, public and private or other, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including in particular:

(a) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(b) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and their media, public, private or other, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(c) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(8) Full support should be provided for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media;

II

United Nations public information policies and activities

1. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement the following recommendations:

(1) The United Nations system as a whole should co-operate in a concerted manner, through its information services, in promoting a more comprehensive and realistic image of the activities and potential of the United Nations system in all its endeavours, in accordance with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations, with particular emphasis on the creation of a climate of confidence, the strengthening of multilateralism and the promotion of the development activities in the United Nations system;

(2) Reaffirming the primary role of the General Assembly in elaborating, co-ordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information, the Secretary-General should be requested to ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the Charter, the priority areas defined by the Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information, so as to ensure an objective and more coherent coverage of, as well as better knowledge about, the United Nations and its work. It is recommended that the Secretary-General ensure that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Co-operate more regularly with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, especially at the working level, with a view to maximizing the contribution of the Department to the efforts of that organization in:

- (i) Encouraging the free flow of information, at the international as well as the national level;
- (ii) Promoting the wider and better balanced dissemination of information, without any obstacle to the freedom of expression;
- (iii) Developing all the appropriate means of strengthening communication capacities in the developing countries in order to increase their participation in the communication process;

(iv) Advancing the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples through all means of mass communication and, to that end, recommending such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image;

(b) Enhance its co-operation with news agencies of and in the developing countries, in particular the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, the Eco-Pool of the News Agencies of Non-Aligned Countries and the Broadcasting Organization of Non-Aligned Countries as well as with other news agencies and intergovernmental and regional organizations;

(c) Continue to disseminate, in co-ordination with the information services of other relevant agencies, information about United Nations activities pertaining, inter alia, to:

- (i) International peace and security;
- (ii) Disarmament;
- (iii) Peace-keeping operations;
- (iv) Decolonization and the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories;
- (v) The elimination of foreign occupation;
- (vi) Human rights;
- (vii) The elimination of all forms of racial discrimination;
- (viii) The advancement of the status of women and their role in society;
- (ix) The problems of economic and social development as well as international economic co-operation aimed at resolving external debt problems;
- (x) The environment;
- (xi) The campaign against terrorism in all its forms, bearing in mind General Assembly resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985;
- (xii) The international campaign against drug abuse and illicit trafficking including adequate coverage of the special session of the General Assembly to consider the question of international co-operation against illicit production, supply, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs, with a view to expanding the scope and increasing the effectiveness of such co-operation, to be held from 20 to 23 February 1990;

(d) Do its utmost to disseminate widely and to publicize the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and the tremendous efforts of the African countries towards recovery and development as well as the positive response by the international community to alleviate the serious economic situation prevailing in Africa;

(e) Strengthen its activities and the dissemination of information on United Nations activities against the policies and practices of apartheid, giving due attention to the unilateral measures and official censorship imposed on the local and international media with regard to all aspects of this issue, provide adequate coverage of the sixteenth special session of the General Assembly on apartheid and its destructive consequences in southern Africa to be held from 12 to 14 December 1989 and report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twelfth session, in 1990;

(f) Continue to disseminate information about activities of the United Nations directed at a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of international conflicts by exclusively peaceful means;

(g) Continue to cover all United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular, and current developments therein, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, and report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twelfth session, in 1990;

(h) Continue to disseminate information about Namibia, in particular the current independence process as provided for in Security Council resolution 435 (1978) of 29 September 1978; the Department should make adequate plans for the establishment of an information centre in Namibia, consulting thereon with the Government of the new nation immediately after independence;

(i) Ensure the provision of coverage of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation, in particular to the revitalization of economic growth and development of the developing countries, to be held from 23 to 27 April 1990;

(3) The Department of Public Information should continue its efforts in promoting an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations system among the peoples of the world and in strengthening the image of the United Nations system as a whole. In this connection, it is recommended that the Secretary-General ensure that the Department:

(a) Continue to maintain consistent editorial independence and accuracy in reporting all material it produces, taking necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions where they occur;

(b) In the context of the review of its role, performance and method of work, continue to apply appropriate modern technologies for the collection, production, storage, dissemination and distribution of information materials, including the use of satellite facilities;

(c) Consider expanding the programme of telephone news bulletins that are paid for by its users;

(d) Continue its co-operation with those countries that have expressed readiness to assist the United Nations in resuming the short-wave broadcasts through their respective national networks free of charge and to encourage expansion of such a type of co-operation with those developed and developing countries with recognized capabilities in this field;

(e) Take adequate measures to resume the taped radio programmes, which it has temporarily curtailed, if so requested by broadcasting stations;

(f) Continue its briefing, assistance and orientation programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries focused on United Nations-related issues;

(g) Identify new forms of co-operation, at the regional and subregional levels, for the training of media professionals and for the improvement of the infrastructure of developing countries in the field of information and communication;

(h) Co-operate with educational institutions of Member States, educators and education policy-makers, informing them about United Nations activities;

(i) Ensure adequate daily coverage of United Nations open meetings in the two working languages of the Secretariat, reflecting the views of all delegations with accuracy and objectivity. It should also continue to co-operate closely with and provide assistance to members of the United Nations Correspondents' Association, taking into account their needs and requirements, especially in the area of press releases, press conferences and briefings, which provide them with basic information for reporting;

(j) Use the official languages of the United Nations adequately in its documents and audio-visual documentation and make balanced use of the two working languages of the Secretariat;

(k) Ensure timely distribution of its material to subscribers and to United Nations information centres;

(4) The Department of Public Information should produce and distribute its publications in a timely manner. In particular, the Secretary-General should be requested to make further efforts regarding the timely appearance of the United Nations Yearbook. The improvement in format and printing of the United Nations Chronicle is welcome. The Department is encouraged to continue to consider the interests of the specific target audiences as it formulates its editorial policies;

(5) The Secretary-General is urged to continue his efforts to secure a sound and stable financial basis for the publications Development Forum and Africa Recovery;

(6) It is recognized that United Nations information centres constitute an important means of disseminating information about the United Nations among the people of the world. In this regard, United Nations information centres should intensify direct and systematic communication exchange with local media, information and educational institutions and non-governmental organizations. The Department should arrange for periodic evaluation of the centres' activities in this regard. Every effort should be made to establish close co-ordination with other field offices of the United Nations system, particularly those of the United Nations Development Programme, in order to avoid duplication of work, taking into account the functional autonomy that the United Nations information centres should have. A report should be submitted to the Committee on Information after the first year of the provisional understanding between the Department and the United Nations Development Programme, reached in accordance with recommendation 37(3) of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations. ^{5/} The Department should provide open and unhindered access by all people to all United Nations information centres and to all materials distributed through the centres. It is also urged to accelerate the process of linking the remaining United Nations information centres that have not been linked with electronic mail;

(7) Stressing the need for co-ordinating the information activities of the United Nations system and recognizing the important role that the Joint United Nations Information Committee plays in this regard, the Department of Public Information is encouraged to continue its active participation in the work of that Committee;

(8) It is recognized that free distribution of materials is necessary in the public information activities of the United Nations. However, as demands increase and whenever it is desirable and possible, the Department of Public Information should actively encourage the sale of its materials;

(9) The Secretary-General is requested to ensure that the reorganization and restructuring of the Department of Public Information strengthen and improve the output of the mandated programmes and activities of the Department, taking into account, in conformity with the relevant provisions of the Charter and of General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986, the need for equitable geographical distribution of posts, especially keeping in mind the levels at which developing countries are underrepresented;

(10) In view of the importance of radio programmes in developing countries, the Secretary-General is requested to enhance the efficiency of and to ensure full programme delivery by all regional radio units, namely the African, Asian, Caribbean, European, Latin American and Middle Eastern Units

^{5/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).

and the Anti-apartheid Programmes Section, including production of radio programmes called for in General Assembly resolution 38/82 B of 15 December 1983;

(11) All reports by the Secretary-General as well as by representatives of the Department of Public Information to the Committee on Information and to the General Assembly, in particular on new programmes or on the expansion of existing programmes, should contain:

- (a) Detailed information on the output of the Department on each topic included in its work programme, which forms the basis of its programme budget;
- (b) The costs of the activities undertaken on each topic;
- (c) Adequate information on target audiences, end-use of the Department's products and analysis of feedback data received by the Department;
- (d) A statement detailing the priority level that the Secretary-General has attached to current or future activities of the Department in documents dealing with such activities;
- (e) The Department's evaluation of the effectiveness of its different programmes and activities, with particular reference to the need constantly to review internal programme elements and activities;

2. Requests the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations relating to the activities of the Department of Public Information in accordance with the budgetary procedures as approved by the General Assembly in resolution 41/213, 42/211 of 21 December 1987 and 43/213 of 21 December 1988, and taking into account the priorities set by the General Assembly;

3. Supports the Secretary-General in his continuing efforts to restructure and revitalize the Department of Public Information, based on the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213;

4. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twelfth session in 1990 on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations in the present resolution;

5. Also requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session on the implementation of the present resolution;

6. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session;

7. Decides to include in the provisional agenda of its forty-fifth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".