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## COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

## SUB-COMMISSION ON THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND THE PRESS

ADDENDUM TO MEMORANDUM CONCERNING POSSIBLE QUESTIONNAIRE ON  
MASS MEDIA OF INFORMATION TO BE SENT TO MEMBER STATES TO PROVIDE  
DOCUMENTATION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

## Memorandum on the Freedom of Information through the Cinema

## I. DEFINITION

The informational cinema consists of several types of films, each of which is suited to a particular form of information. These types may be defined as follows:

- (a) Newsreels - which present important world events two or three times weekly.
- (b) Editorials - which, in the well-known form of The March of Time, deal with single news items with full details and commentaries.
- (c) Documentary Films - dealing with the life of peoples or with important international economic and social problems.

## II. THE SITUATION OF INFORMATION FILMS

(a) During the War

During the war, the United Nations realized the importance of the cinema as a medium of information. Its use was intensified to keep the public informed of the progress of operations, the world political situation and above all the war aims. During this period, information films played a very important part, and proved their psychological value. The cinema-going public then showed a keen interest in visual information - it looked forward to the weekly or fortnightly newsreel as to a daily paper.

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Moreover, the newsreels of the Allies, having pooled their resources, succeeded in crossing the enemy lines in order to bring information to the people of the occupied countries. United Newsreels 16 mm. films were regularly dropped by parachute and received by members of the Resistance who then organized, at the risk of their lives, secret shows of these pictures which gave concrete expression to their hopes. Thus, during this period, the wonderful and courageous work of those, civilian or military, who recorded history while they shaped it was fully utilized for the requirements of information. Thanks to their united efforts, the informational cinema fulfilled its mission.

(b) At the Present Time

Since the end of the war, government and inter-governmental activities have been perceptibly reduced in the field of information films. Circumstances resulting from various influences have contributed to diminishing the production, distribution and projection of information films.

Taking this situation into consideration, the Sub-Commission might consider it advisable that experts should examine the various causes preventing full utilization of this important means of spreading and freely exchanging visual information among the peoples.\*

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\* Attached is a Resolution by the United Nations Film Board addressed to the Secretary-General, which the Sub-Commission may wish to consult for information.

The Film Board is a co-ordinating and executive body for the production and distribution of films and visual media of information and education.

The following specialized agencies, together with the United Nations, represented by the Department of Information, participate in the work of the Board: UNESCO, FAO, ILO, WHO, ICAO, the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.



ANNEX

RECOMMENDATION ADOPTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS FILM BOARD

8 May 1947

In view of the forthcoming meeting of the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information, the United Nations Film Board wants to draw attention to the increased importance of the use of visual media--photography, graphic arts and motion pictures.

Since the United Nations and its agencies have to depend upon understanding by the peoples of the world for the success of their programmes, it is clear that such understanding can be achieved only by the full employment of all information media in all countries.

The Film Board urges the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Sub-Commission its recommendation that studies and surveys of the problems encountered in the international exchange and use of visual media be made by specialized experts in the field of visual information.

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