

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly
FORTY-FOURTH SESSION
Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
18th meeting
held on
Friday, 10 November 1989
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. JUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

later: Mr. FLEMMING (Saint Lucia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 79: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned
within one week of the date of publication to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2.750,
United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/44/SR.18
24 November 1989
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

89-57033 2068S (E)

20P.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/44/21, A/44/653, A/44/509, A/44/329 and Add.1, A/44/433 and Add.1)

1. Mr. ALEMU (Ethiopia) expressed his delegation's deep dissatisfaction with the continuing and increasing imbalance in the flow of information between developed and developing countries. Failure to regard measures to rectify the situation as a matter of priority was inconsistent with the current spirit of international co-operation. It would be possible to contribute to the establishment of a more balanced flow of information through greater support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication being carried out by UNESCO. Despite its extremely limited financial resources, the Programme had extended meaningful assistance to developing countries in improving their communication infrastructures and could be much more effective if the number of developed countries contributing to the Programme's Special Account increased.
2. Ethiopia was convinced that the Committee on Information had taken the right course of action in choosing not to submit recommendations to the current session of the General Assembly, thereby manifesting a strong desire to reach a consensus. The spirit of mutual understanding and co-operation characterizing the progress achieved in international political relations should also be extended into the area of information and communication.
3. Mr. CHAVUNDUKA (Zimbabwe) said that the world had become a big village in which all nations depended on the information media for news about international events. Different cultures and political tendencies led to more than one way of reporting and differing areas of emphasis. In general, the mass media of the Western countries considered stories about poverty and political unrest in the developing countries to be more interesting than reports about efforts to improve the situation. That underlined the need for a balanced flow of information.
4. The developing countries did not possess the requisite capacity for disseminating information effectively, a situation which created an unbalanced flow, most information coming from the developed countries. That was the reason for the untiring call by the developing countries for the establishment of a new world information and communication order to bring about a more equitable interaction in the field of information and strengthen peace and international understanding in the process. Although a number of developed countries had acknowledged the existence of an imbalance, no concrete measures had yet been taken to eliminate it. The developed countries should therefore substantially increase their contributions so that the developing countries could create the requisite communication infrastructures. It was also essential to enable the developing countries to have greater access to modern technology and to step up training in the area of communication. Those activities should be supplemented by increased co-operation between the Department of Public Information (DPI) and UNESCO, on the one hand, and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, regional news agencies of developing countries and the Broadcasting Organization of the Non-Aligned Countries on the other.

(Mr. Chavunduka, Zimbabwe)

5. With regard to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on agenda item 79 (A/44/433), his delegation was disturbed about the comment made in the forward that full co-operation from DPI had not been forthcoming. It was encouraged by the fact that the Secretary-General, in his note on the report (A/44/433/Add.1), had expressed his intention to deal with the matter so as to ensure that agreed upon procedures were adhered to and that communications were properly channelled.

6. The comments in the report on DPI's reform process (A/44/433) were certainly thought-provoking, and it was to be hoped that they would prove useful, notwithstanding the fact that in his note on the subject (A/44/329/Add.1), the Secretary-General had not agreed with some of the comments and recommendations.

7. The need to continue radio broadcasts to South Africa as long as apartheid persisted in that country was recognized by all. At a time when Namibia's independence was imminent, attention must be focused on anti-apartheid efforts separately from other priority activities, such as those relating to the questions of Namibia and Palestine. Zimbabwe would therefore continue to keep a watchful eye on the programme delivery of the section dealing with apartheid and would not hesitate to draw attention to any problem that might arise. It was to be hoped that the Anti-Apartheid Programmes Section would be assigned sufficient personnel to enable it to function smoothly. In that connection, his delegation recalled General Assembly resolution 43/50 H of 5 December 1988 on the dissemination of information against the policies of apartheid of the régime of racist South Africa and looked forward to reports showing that that resolution had been complied with in full.

8. His delegation noted with satisfaction the information provided by the Under-Secretary-General on several reviews of information activities against apartheid policies in South Africa, especially the report on the assessment of needs for technical assistance to radio stations in front-line States that were broadcasting or willing to broadcast to South Africa. Another report was awaited on a study on existing and potential interests in broadcasting United Nations anti-apartheid radio programmes as well as a study of the extent to which such programmes were listened to in South Africa. His delegation was convinced that strengthening the capacity of the front-line States to broadcast to South Africa would mean that the people of that country were better placed to follow United Nations anti-apartheid activities.

9. With regard to the negotiations under way among the chairmen of the various regional groups and China, the reports received from the Chairman of the Group of 77 had not been encouraging at all. Agreement on most of the issues had been elusive, and one side had come up with new demands. His delegation appealed to that group to negotiate in a constructive spirit and to seek a compromise, because that was the way to reach consensus.

10. Mr. CHOKWE (Kenya) said that 12 years had elapsed since the concept of a new world information and communication order had been put on the agenda of the General Assembly following a proposal by the Non-Aligned Movement. The ultimate objective of such an order was to eradicate inequalities in the exchange of information between nations, improve the media system in the developing countries and promote constructive and acceptable international co-operation in the field. His delegation reiterated that the efforts towards realizing a new world information and communication order should not be seen as an attempt to impose a uniform communication policy on all countries, nor was such an order synonymous with censorship or control of the media.

11. His delegation supported the establishment of a new world information and communication order and a wider and better flow of information ensuring diversity of sources and free access to information. Had there been a more effective flow of information, it might have been possible to avoid many of the recent calamities that had struck a number of African countries, for example drought, floods and pest invasion.

12. He paid tribute to the efforts of the Department of Public Information in discharging the tasks entrusted to it, especially in promoting the work of the United Nations in many sensitive areas such as the Middle East and southern Africa and urged DPI to expand its information activities in both Namibia and southern Africa in general in order to thwart the ill-intentioned plans of the South African apartheid propaganda machine.

13. His country was not satisfied with the manner in which DPI was conducting the training programmes for journalists in Africa and, in particular, in Kenya. Although the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information had pointed out that DPI could not function as a professional school, the Department should be considered an institution offering high-level consultancy in training programmes for professionals from developing countries. Furthermore, Kenya was still to benefit from the annual training programmes for broadcasting and print media journalists.

14. DPI should explore the possibility of expanding the training programme's course content by involving some of the better institutions of higher learning in the training of participants. Further, the Department should carry out a constant feed-back evaluation of the programme to determine its impact since inception and how it could be strengthened to cope with changing times.

15. Kenya supported the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication and considered it part of the efforts to establish a new world information and communication order. Referring to the report in document A/AC.198/1989/6, he joined other delegations in asking DPI to take into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution of posts at all levels to enable the younger university graduates to begin to assume responsibilities.

(Mr. Chokwe, Kenya)

16. The Pan-African News Agency, established by the Organization of African Unity, was striving, with its meagre resources, to fill the information void in remote corners of Africa and, therefore, closer co-operation between the Agency and DPI was strongly recommended.

17. Mr. BELLINA (Peru) said that information and communication had an important role to play in publicizing the new, positive developments taking place in international relations. Peru, as a democratic country, defended and practised the right to free speech and information within the framework of the United Nations Charter and with the guarantees laid down in its Constitution. All countries which valued democratic mechanisms in international relations should promote efforts to achieve the objective of universal and free access to information, in spite of differences in systems of government and levels of development.

18. His delegation supported the efforts of UNESCO to promote culture, education and intellectual freedom and considered that its positions on freedom of the press and the independence of the communication media must be unequivocal. The ambiguity of certain terms had been detrimental to the communication media in the third world. The need for a more balanced flow of information between North and South and the urgent necessity of strengthening the material, technical and human infrastructure of developing countries in the field of communication should not be conceived in a way that might imply conditionality or promote disregard for the exercise of freedom. It was hoped that the current UNESCO General Conference would overcome the differences in major programme area IV concerning communication for the benefit of mankind and support the right to inform and be informed.

19. With regard to the work of the Committee on Information, he said that the search for consensus was essential in the process of negotiation and that, therefore, there must be give and take. Although there were basic positions which could not be changed, flexibility should be viewed as a positive attitude necessary for establishing the guiding principles in the field of information and communication and the specific mandate of the Department of Public Information. His delegation called upon all States to reach agreement on a consensus document that promoted greater understanding and co-operation among nations. It was unacceptable that States could not reach agreement in that field and were thus depriving their peoples of true information that helped strengthen their ties of friendship.

20. Similarly, it was necessary to recognize the efforts of the Department of Public Information to modernize the system for disseminating information on United Nations activities in spite of the financial difficulties facing it. He urged the appropriate bodies to take account of the immediate needs of the Department so that it could carry out its relevant programmes.

21. Furthermore, mention should be made of the work of the United Nations information centres, which, in some cases, should restructure their functions by co-operating more closely with the States in which they were situated and operating within the dynamic process which modern techniques in publicity and communication

(Mr. Bellina, Peru)

required. The United Nations was experiencing one of the most important moments in its history and coverage enabling the importance of its work to be appreciated was essential.

22. Lastly, his delegation expressed its concern at the views put forward by the Joint Inspection Unit in the report "Review of United Nations public information networks - the United Nations Information Centres" (A/44/433) and requested an explanation in that regard.

23. Mr. KUTSCHEN (German Democratic Republic) said that it was imperative to consider in a constructive manner the questions relating to information, which were an essential element of international relations and national development. The dissemination and exchange of correct and objective information were of growing importance in dealing with such questions as the safeguarding of peace, disarmament, development or the environment. In that context, the mass media could make an effective contribution to confidence-building in international relations by disseminating information on other peoples and cultures and helping to dissipate enemy stereotypes. The responsibility of journalists and politicians in that regard should be stressed. Journalists in his country were currently entrusted with the responsibility of reporting on the incipient turn towards a renewal of socialism. His delegation supported the developing countries' efforts to establish a new world information and communication order in which they could participate as equals. The confrontation which still existed in that field should be replaced with constructive dialogue based on areas of common interest and the need to co-operate.

24. It was necessary to promote the role played in the field of information and communication by United Nations bodies and, in particular, UNESCO and the Department of Public Information, which were carrying out very important tasks relating to the issues that had been defined as priority areas by the General Assembly. It was also necessary to enhance the effectiveness and quality of information work in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213. In that connection, he welcomed the streamlining of DPI and the technical procedures and methodical approaches described in the pertinent documents of the Committee on Information, as well as the discussions which, like that on the information programme concerning the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG), promoted co-operation between the Department of Public Information and Member States.

25. He commended the increasingly important work of the United Nations information centres and stressed the need to strengthen their political mandate and to improve their conditions of work. The German Democratic Republic took a positive view of the co-operation with the Prague centre, which a number of non-governmental organizations, such as the League for the United Nations, were trying to promote.

26. His delegation did not concur with some aspects of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the information centres (A/44/329). For example, the link-up between the United Nations information centres and the offices of UNDP could give

(Mr. Kutschen, German
Democratic Republic)

rise to considerable difficulties with regard to the fulfilment of the original mandate of those centres.

27. His country would continue to display the requisite political willingness in order to ensure that progress was made on questions relating to information during the current year's deliberations.

28. Mr. MAKSOUD (Observer, League of Arab States) welcomed the improved efficiency in the Department of Public Information which had been made possible through restructuring and which encouraged the expectation that there would be fresh inputs in the field of communication and public information. He also noted with satisfaction that the Department was co-operating with the League of Arab States and expressed the hope that such collaboration would be intensified in the future.

29. It was important that the Department of Public Information should keep pace with rapid developments in communication media by making the adjustments needed to ensure that public awareness with regard to the United Nations was duly reflected in a commitment which would enable the Organization to fulfil its mandate.

30. The highly significant changes taking place at the international level were also reflected in the new atmosphere of co-operation and détente within the United Nations. That new situation should also involve information, which could be a useful instrument of development, provided that it was not used to distort reality and to hide the facts.

31. Equality between countries was thus the necessary concomitant of freedom of information. It was unacceptable that the criteria governing information should be determined exclusively by those elements possessing the technology that enabled them to control "global" information media.

32. Both the Department of Public Information and the United Nations were aware that there was an imbalance in the information field between the developed countries and the non-aligned countries and the other developing countries. The two latter groups needed the technological assistance and know-how which would enable them to universalize the concept of freedom of information.

33. With regard to the public image of the United Nations, in recent months, as a result of recent developments in international affairs, the Organization seemed to be receiving better information coverage, although grave deficiencies remained.

34. It was an encouraging fact that the super-Powers had stated their willingness to collaborate within the United Nations system in order to depoliticize the Organization's proceedings and promote an atmosphere of realism and practicality and to eliminate the polemics which had been so frequent in the past. However, he did not consider that politicization was necessarily a negation of realism and practicality and pointed out that conformity should not be a substitute for a legitimate concern for consensus. At the same time, argument, without the element

(Mr. Maksoud)

of fiery rhetoric, was the medium by which different points of view in the international community were reconciled and the aspirations of the peoples of the third world addressed, particularly those of the peoples of Palestine and South Africa, which some would hope to silence.

35. The Department of Public Information and the Committee on Information should bear in mind the rights and aspirations of the developing countries and take into account differences of opinion, in order to establish a new information order that would correspond to those aspirations.

36. Mr. MANSOUR (Islamic Republic of Iran), after congratulating the Committee on Information on the steps it had taken in the past 10 years to discharge the mandate entrusted to it under General Assembly resolution 34/182, expressed the hope that the international community would make the best use of the opportunities that had come about for strengthening the role of the United Nations in promoting international peace and understanding, while regretting the fact that the Committee on Information had not succeeded in promoting the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

37. The establishment of a new world information and communication order based on the free circulation and more balanced dissemination of information under the supervision of the United Nations (General Assembly resolution 43/60 A) could increase the participation of all countries in the dissemination of information and pave the way for the access of all peoples throughout the world to true information. The aim of such a new order would be to rectify the existing imbalance in the transfer of information, with a view to establishing realistic criteria for development by reflecting reality more faithfully.

38. It was obvious that the existing unilateral and imbalanced system could not promote international co-operation. The prerequisite for the free circulation of information - a condition not currently met - was the existence of diverse and non-exclusive channels for the circulation of topical information flows. The existing system enabled countries with exclusive access to advanced technology and with the requisite communication skills and adequate resources to promote their own views, while collecting, processing and disseminating news as they wished.

39. One negative effect of the existing information and communication system, mentioned in the final communiqué of the Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries in September 1989, was the use of the mass media as an instrument of propaganda against the cultural values and heritage of developing countries, the achievement of hundreds and sometimes thousands of years of endeavour and exchange of ideas. Respect for social traditions and cultural values, and also for the sovereignty of States, was one of the principles which should underlie a new information order.

40. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was able, through its research and study in that field, to play a central role, particularly through the International Programme for the Development of

(Mr. Mansour, Islamic Republic of Iran)

Communication, in rectifying the existing imbalance and in modernizing communication infrastructures in the developing countries. For its part, the Department of Public Information could play an important role in ensuring better presentation of the work of the United Nations.

41. His delegation supported the co-operation between the Department of Public Information, UNESCO and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and also the Department's efforts in publicizing United Nations activities in the fields of economic and social development, improvement of the economic situation in Africa, disarmament, the question of Palestine, apartheid, international peace and security, the role of women in society and the campaign against illicit drug-trafficking, emphasizing the need for the major communication media to pay greater attention to the problems of Palestine and apartheid.

42. The Department of Public Information should continue to accord the greatest attention to the process of decolonization and the establishment of an independent State of Namibia and should consider the possibility of establishing an information centre in Namibia in order to prevent South Africa from obstructing that country's independence process.

43. The equitable geographical distribution of posts in the Department of Public Information, particularly at the highest levels, was one of the questions that should be accorded particular attention. Since the role of the United Nations in the resolution of international disputes and the struggle for peace was increasingly important, the Department of Public Information should make known the goals and functions of the United Nations system by various means, in particular, by the holding of round-table debates with directors of communication media and the use of modern technology in the collection, production, storage and publication of information materials, which could improve its activities qualitatively and quantitatively.

44. Mr. DENISON (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, in spite of the lengthy debates held on the item "Questions relating to information", which had been on the General Assembly's agenda for 10 years, it had not been possible to elaborate related principles acceptable to all Member States. That, in turn, was preventing sufficient attention being accorded to the fundamental issues of United Nations information policy.

45. Recently there had been a significant increase in the authority of the United Nations in the world and its effectiveness for achieving co-operation among States. That gave grounds for hope regarding the possibility of arriving at an agreement in a sphere so complicated by ideological confrontations as that of information.

46. The new mentality that inspired the policy of glasnost offered many possibilities for the dissemination and exchange of information and co-operation in that regard, in accordance with the Helsinki Final Act. Furthermore, the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union was to consider a draft Press Law, which would deal with

(Mr. Denison, USSR)

norms of international law and contribute to the establishment of conditions ensuring that the press formed a part of civil society and ceased being an element of the State machinery.

47. Referring to international co-operation in the field of information, he mentioned various projects envisaged by his country: the formulation, under United Nations auspices, of a world information programme based on transcendence of political and ideological discrepancies and aimed at achieving the primordial objective of the survival of mankind; the creation of a cultural and informational television programme in collaboration with Intervision and Eurovision; the creation of a pan-European information council with the task of standardizing co-operation among European countries and eradicating disinformation; and the publication of a joint review of European countries devoted to the exchange of cultural values.

48. His delegation welcomed the proposal of the Group of 77 for the establishment of a new world information and communication order. The elimination of existing inequalities in that field through the strengthening of the information infrastructure of the developing countries was a requirement of the age, in which any form of dependency and inequality was inadmissible. The proposal of the Group of 77 on the International Programme for the Development of Communication constituted an adequate basis for achieving consensus on the subject, but the same was true of the importance ascribed by the Group of Western countries to freedom of the press and the free flow of information. In the Soviet Union, it was known from experience where disregard of those principles led; sometimes State control of information might seem an effective measure, but, in reality, it might be a remedy worse than the ailment.

49. He took note of the constructive observations contained in the statements of Mrs. Sévigny, Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, the Chairman of the Committee, the representative of Pakistan and the representative of UNESCO on the importance of the international exchange of objective information in the fields of international peace, security and co-operation.

50. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit merited attention as an attempt to analyse objectively the process of the reorganization of the Department of Public Information. It therefore gave rise to concern that, as stated in its conclusions, the new administrative machinery of the Department was not sufficiently effective, in particular, because of the duplication of functions and the reduction of P-5 posts.

51. Among the Department's activities, he commended the increase in the effectiveness of audio-visual materials and the increase in popularity of the weekly television programme The UN in Action and the programme World Chronicle, which publicized the activities of the United Nations and was transmitted in the five official languages. Since the Department's budget continued to be modest, it seemed appropriate to carry out priority projects with extrabudgetary resources.

(Mr. Denison, USSR)

52. He reiterated his delegation's proposal for the creation, within the Committee on Information, of a group of experts composed of specialists in information matters from all the regional groups to function as a working body of the Committee between sessions and make it possible to increase the effectiveness of its work. He welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal (A/44/222) for a review, by 1999 at the latest, of the activities of the United Nations Secretariat in the field of public information outside the Department of Public Information and hoped that it would result in a rational redistribution of functions between the Department and other Secretariat units in order to reduce waste of resources to a minimum.

53. Information activities should receive the interest not only of States and Governments but also of world public opinion. In that regard, he commended the activities of the Department aimed at broadening co-operation with non-governmental organizations and national mass media. An example might be a regional conference on "The United Nations and the mass media of Europe", which was to be held in 1990 in Moscow, under the auspices of the associations of the Ukrainian SSR, the USSR and the Byelorussian SSR and with the collaboration of the United Nations and TASS.

54. Miss MARTINEZ (Nicaragua) said that new technologies for the immediate communication of information at the world level were threatening to increase still further the gap between the developed countries and the developing countries. The existing imbalance in information flows should be remedied as soon as possible. The elimination of that unjust situation would make it possible for all to know the true situation of the developing countries and the real causes of the main problems of the world. It was also an essential condition for contributing to greater harmony in international relations and the promotion of confidence.

55. The information imbalance could only be brought to an end with the establishment of a new world information and communication order. At their meeting in Belgrade in September 1989, the Heads of State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had reaffirmed the need to intensify still further co-operation between those countries in order to establish a new world information and communication order based on the free and balanced flow of information.

56. The new international order should moreover be based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all States and on respect for their traditional social and cultural values. That approach would benefit the developed countries, which would be better able to understand the realities of other countries.

57. The work of the United Nations in the information field and the role of the Department of Public Information (DPI) were of crucial importance. DPI should attach special importance to regional conflicts, the problems of decolonization, the economic crisis of the developing countries, the problem of foreign debt and the deterioration of the social situation, which endangered the development and survival of many countries.

58. In connection with the statements made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, her delegation considered that the efforts made to increase

(Miss Martinez, Nicaragua)

DPI's efficiency would bring about effective changes in the organization and methodology of its work. Her country considered that DPI should give priority in its work to the themes which were of special interest to the developing countries. A more equitable geographic distribution of the Department's staff would also contribute to the greater effectiveness of its work.

59. The theme which was uppermost in the discussions of the Committee on Information was the establishment of a new international information and communication order. What was required to achieve that goal was political will, a change in the understanding of the problem and greater flexibility on the part of the developed countries.

60. Her delegation wished to express support for the work of UNESCO in the information field and its programmes of co-operation with the United Nations Department of Public Information.

61. Mr. Flemming (Saint Lucia) took the Chair.

62. Ms. AL DULEMI (Iraq) said that information was a very important factor at a time when communication played a priority role in the political decisions of nations. The purpose of the new international information and communication order was not to limit free choice but to ensure the equality and sovereignty of all States, as laid down by the Charter. Because of an inequality of resources, however, one group enjoyed privileges that the others did not possess.

63. The interests of the mass media did not coincide with the interests of the developing countries, and for that reason information flowed in only one direction. When that happened, the developing countries often received information which consisted of an organized campaign against them. The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries was fully aware of that problem and had assigned it priority importance.

64. Information should flow in both directions and the United Nations should join in the efforts to see that that happened. One of its instruments, the Committee on Information, was trying to reach that goal through the establishment of a new international information and communication order.

65. The right to free expression was a natural right recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On the other hand, fundamental rights existed within a framework of moral and religious values. If freedom of expression was abused, it produced results inimical to society. The United Nations had a very important part to play in that respect and should help the Department of Public Information increase the effectiveness of its role.

66. Unfortunately, there was a tendency to reduce the resources of the Department of Public Information, as was noted in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit. The reductions particularly affected the information centres in the Arab countries and the staff of those centres. Her delegation believed that the reorganization of the United Nations was necessary, but not at the expense of the programmes established by the General Assembly.

(Ms. Al Dulemi, Iraq)

67. Her delegation considered that the Committee on Information should give priority to the dissemination of information on Namibia, Palestine, decolonization, disarmament and the peaceful settlement of disputes. It also recognized the importance of the efforts made by UNESCO to meet the information needs of the developing countries, and was grateful for the efforts made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information in that field.

68. Mr. OUANE (Mali) said that for more than a decade the United Nations had been dealing with information questions in order to promote the establishment of a fairer and more effective new international information order based on the free movement and broader and more balanced dissemination of information. Its goal in doing so was to find ways to achieve a lasting peace. Communication could play an essential part in that respect.

69. In connection with the report of the Committee on Information (A/44/21), he said that his country was prepared to work assiduously to realize the enormous potential of information for achieving the ideals of peace, mutual understanding and progress among all the peoples of the world. The present status and role of information were unsatisfactory because they hid the inequality between the developed and the developing countries in the production and dissemination of information and in access to it.

70. His delegation firmly supported the recommendations of the Committee on Information, in particular those relating to the total eradication of apartheid, the strengthening of human rights, the foreign debt of the developing countries, the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine and the maintenance of international peace and security.

71. With respect to the activities of the Department of Public Information, he emphasized the important role of the Department in disseminating information on the major objectives of the United Nations, such as the decolonization of Namibia, the struggle against apartheid and the maintenance of international peace and security.

72. His delegation welcomed the co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the Pool of News Agencies of Non-Aligned Countries, a co-operation which it hoped would be strengthened and expanded. In that connection, he pointed out that it was important to give DPI the necessary financial resources. At the same time, it was essential that the geographic distribution of posts in the Department should be as equitable as possible. He also noted with satisfaction the role of UNESCO in the creation of communication structures in the developing countries through the International Programme for Communication Development.

73. All States should transcend their immediate interests and agree to co-operate in order to place the information and communication media at the service of all.

74. Mr. MENON (India) said that an encouraging sign in current international relations was the desire among countries to try to resolve differences through negotiation and accommodation. However, care should be taken to ensure that the climate of good will benefited all countries and led to global co-operation.

(Mr. Menon, India)

75. The developing countries remained poorly endowed in the field of information, since information sources in the developed countries virtually controlled all access and information flows. Moreover, the information gap between the developed and the developing countries had widened as a result of new technologies. It was important that technology should not become an end in itself and that, in serving the needs of one segment of the globe, it should not ignore the others. The new world information and communication order addressed those basic questions.

76. India supported UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication and had contributed \$100,000 to it in 1989. It was unfortunate that the support extended to the Programme remained very small, and his delegation endorsed the view of the Director-General of UNESCO that the Programme should focus on encouraging South-South co-operation.

77. Turning to the Department of Public Information, he wished to emphasize the importance of strengthening its co-operation with the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, the Eco-Pool and the Broadcasting Organization of the Non-Aligned Countries. The DPI should also focus attention on highlighting the importance of the role of the United Nations in Namibia, on disseminating information about the odious practice of apartheid and on economic and social development issues.

78. India attached special importance to the role of women in development and requested that the Department should prepare information materials on that important subject. It should also consider providing special training facilities for women in the media and should select a larger number of women, particularly women from developing countries, for the other programmes that it administered.

79. In addition, the Department had an important contribution to make in the area of narcotic drugs by actively participating in the campaign against drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

80. The United Nations information centres served a special and very useful function. Facilities in those centres should be upgraded, and they should be assigned senior-level personnel. India noted with interest paragraph 128 of document A/44/329, which recommended the establishment of information centre outposts at Bombay, Madras and, if possible, Bangalore and Calcutta. In closing, taking his inspiration from the counsel of Jawaharlal Nehru, he said that the media had not only the freedom to inform, but also the responsibility to do so in a balanced way, with sensitivity and compassion.

81. Mr. Oudovenko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) resumed the Chair.

82. Mr. MENSAH (Togo) said that his country was steadfastly committed to a new, more just and better balanced world information and communication order, as well as to strengthening the role of the United Nations in the field of information. It should be noted that efforts to improve information and communication relationships had produced rather modest results. That situation was explained by the

(Mr. Mensah, Togo)

predominance of economic and financial interests and by a will to impose a certain cultural order. However, the exercise of the right of information presupposed the respect of the cultural and social values of each nation and the promotion of dialogue and understanding among peoples. Scientific and technical progress had brought about changes in the field of information which, from the point of view of establishing the new order, should not be the monopoly of certain super-developed Powers. Quite to the contrary, an effort must be made to encourage simultaneously the transfer of information and communication technology, the establishment of appropriate infrastructures in developing countries and the dissemination of information that was uninfluenced by cultural models or prejudices and devoid of any spirit of domination.

83. Togo attached great importance to the contribution UNESCO was called upon to make to efforts to establish a new world order and reaffirmed its support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which played an important role by promoting technical co-operation and contributing to the development of communication infrastructures in developing countries. The establishment of the new world order depended to a great extent on strengthening the capabilities of developing countries in the field of communication. Togo fully supported the selection criteria for approving and financing projects applied by the International Programme's Intergovernmental Council. Co-operation between the United Nations and UNESCO should be strengthened by the adoption of concrete measures to promote the free flow and wider, better balanced dissemination of information.

84. The success of efforts to promote the new world order and strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of information depended on increased dialogue within the Committee on Information. It was therefore a matter of concern that the Committee had been unable to reach a consensus at its most recent session, despite concessions by the various regional groups and China. Those concessions did, however, show a will to pursue a dialogue. Future efforts should take into account the negative effects of imbalances between the industrialized countries and the developing countries and should focus on creating the conditions in which they could be eliminated.

85. The efforts of the Department of Public Information were to be commended, especially its co-operation with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and UNESCO, as well as the activities relating to decolonization and the Namibian independence process, the elimination of racial discrimination and African economic recovery and development. His delegation was pleased at the continuation of training programmes for broadcasters and journalists in developing countries and believed that the programmes should be enhanced so that those countries would have the human resources they needed to improve their capabilities in that area. The idea of obtaining external support for broadening the training programmes and increasing the number of trainees involved should be put into practice. Also, the plans to transmit United Nations reports in English, French and Spanish, to the five base press agencies in Asia, Africa and Latin America should be adopted and implemented as soon as possible. The proposal by the radio-broadcasting

(Mr. Mensah, Togo)

organizations of the non-aligned countries for a project to create a programme-exchange service represented a very positive initiative. It warranted detailed study and should be put into practice as soon as possible.

86. Togo noted with satisfaction the Department's activities with respect to the dissemination of information on the Namibian independence process and the intensive information campaign on the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development.

87. His delegation had read with interest the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit regarding United Nations information centres and the reorganization of the Department of Public Information, as well as the Secretary-General's comments. United Nations information centres should play a very important role, especially in ensuring the widest possible dissemination of information about United Nations ideals and activities. He recalled that, in resolution 43/60 A of 6 December 1988, the General Assembly had urged the strengthening of those centres and, among other things, had entrusted them with the task of intensifying direct communication with local information media, educational institutions and non-governmental organizations recognized by the Economic and Social Council, in a mutually beneficial way. The comments of the Secretary-General on the recommendation to close some centres and retain others for obvious geopolitical reasons deserved special attention and in-depth examination. The sphere of action of the centres should not be limited as a result of co-ordination with UNDP field offices, since the importance of their function would continue to increase as conflicts were settled and new initiatives emerged for the resolution of the debt question and the renewal of economic growth and development. For that reason, the Government of Togo hoped that a United Nations information centre would be opened in Lomé.

88. He took note of the information submitted by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information on the work of the Department of Public Information, especially regarding questions of decolonization, self-determination and the socio-economic development of developing countries. He emphasized the need to consider efficiency, as well as the interests of Member States during the restructuring of the Department, especially with regard to the principle of equitable geographic distribution of posts in all categories. The establishment of a new world information and communication order could contribute to greater understanding between peoples and thus help to strengthen international peace and co-operation. That was a noble goal towards which energies, dialogue and political will must be mobilized. The elimination of information imbalances between industrialized countries and developing countries was an unavoidable imperative in order to make international solidarity a present reality.

89. Mr. FARES (Democratic Yemen) said that so far the noble goals of balance and justice aspired to through the establishment of a new world information and communication order had been disregarded by the States with a monopoly over the global information media, which clung to the current situation of imbalance. Undoubtedly, the inequality of the existing information system had had negative effects and had presented obstacles to improvements in international relations.

(Mr. Fares, Democratic Yemen)

90. Despite the flexibility of the Group of 77, negotiations, rather than fulfilling their function of resolving differences, appeared to have intensified them. His delegation emphasized the need for sustained effort in order to achieve a solution ensuring balance and equality and reaffirmed its hope that the spirit of dialogue would bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

91. Democratic Yemen appreciated the efforts undertaken to improve the functioning of the Department of Public Information so as to allow it to fulfil its mandate and hoped that those efforts would continue. Its responsibility was enhanced as international confidence in the United Nations increased.

92. His delegation wished to emphasize that, according to document A/44/653, activities relating to the question of Palestine were very limited. His delegation hoped that the Department would become more actively involved in informing the public on questions of such importance.

93. United Nations information networks had a fundamental mission to make known to peoples the Organization's role in all areas and its achievements of recent years, which had given new impetus to United Nations activities. It was hoped that United Nations information centres would receive more support and that no effort would be spared to broaden the Department's co-operation with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries.

94. In view of the importance it accorded to information, Democratic Yemen stressed the fundamental role of UNESCO and its International Programme for the Development of Communication, which represented a basic step towards the strengthening of information infrastructure in developing countries. However, assistance received by the third world remained very limited compared to true needs in that area, and he urged the United Nations, UNESCO and the developed countries to co-operate in order to enable developing countries to have access to new technologies, strengthen their information infrastructure and train needed personnel.

95. Mr. AWAWDEH (Jordan) said that the question of information was now of even greater importance than in the past, since the communication revolution had caused events in any region of the world to have repercussions on all other regions. Furthermore, in the current century the world had witnessed the development of nuclear weapons. Without doubt the best way to curb their destructive power was to increase communication among all nations on the basis of respect and mutual trust, thus dispelling fears and doubts and bringing home the fact that the problems faced by mankind, such as the arms race, drugs and pollution, were a threat to all.

96. At a time when the role of the United Nations was gaining new vitality, the Department of Public Information had the important mission of making known its activities. For that reason, it was necessary to enhance its capacity in order to allow it to fulfil more effectively the functions entrusted to it by the Committee on Information. That Committee had held its eleventh session in an atmosphere of détente, which heralded a new era in international relations and had been reflected

(Mr. Awawdeh, Jordan)

in its negotiations, which had come closer than ever before to consensus. The Committee had therefore refrained from formulating recommendations in the hope that it would be able to reach agreement through further consultations. His delegation was sure that consensus could be achieved if all interested parties intensified their efforts and showed greater understanding and that such a consensus would have positive repercussions on the effectiveness of the Department of Public Information.

97. Jordan favoured the establishment of a new world information and communication order that would democratize information activities. In order to achieve that, the infrastructure of the developing countries must be strengthened, more objective information disseminated, and a free and balanced exchange of information guaranteed, but that did not imply that limits should be imposed on freedom of expression.

98. The existing information order divided the world into information producers and information consumers, as a result of the technological gap between developing countries and developed countries. UNESCO's information activities through the International Programme for the Development of Communication were therefore most commendable. In view of the importance of its role, Jordan hoped that UNESCO would intensify its co-operation with the Department of Public Information with the aim of establishing the new order.

99. Jordan supported the reorganization of the Department, which was designed to increase its efficiency and its capacity to adapt, and reiterated the need for an equitable geographical distribution of its posts, particularly at the higher levels. It was also necessary to maintain the most vital programmes and activities for developing countries, such as those related to colonialism, apartheid, the right of peoples to self-determination, and economic and social development, with particular emphasis on activities concerned with the urgent questions of Palestine and its intifadah and of Namibia.

100. In spite of the financial problems facing the Department, it was to be hoped that the functioning of the United Nations information centres would be strengthened, particularly the one in the Arab Middle East, as the dissemination of information on the Organization affected its public image. Moreover, Jordan supported the training programmes for journalists from developing countries which the Department was carrying out and trusted that they would be strengthened and that fact-finding missions would continue to be sent to the regions where most human rights violations occurred, such as the occupied territories and South Africa.

101. Jordan also welcomed the collaboration between the Department and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

102. Mr. TARAR (Pakistan) said that the debate on the establishment of a new world information and communication order had begun many years ago when the revolution in

(Mr. Tarar, Pakistan)

communications technology had transformed the world into a very homogeneous place and had brought individuals and societies much closer together. While information was an excellent medium for promoting international peace and security, it was also a very dangerous instrument of power, because its negative applications could hamper developmental processes. Moreover, it had been realized that immediate reform was needed in order to make information impartial, objective and balanced.

103. It was regrettable that no progress had been achieved to that end. If anything, the situation had worsened. The debate on the new world information order was creating serious divisions in the international community and the new order was viewed in some quarters as a threat to the freedom of information. However, its sole purpose was really to improve the communications technology, professional skills and infrastructural capabilities of the developing world.

104. The developing countries whole-heartedly supported the ideal of freedom of information, particularly Pakistan, whose Prime Minister, Mohtarama Benazir Bhutto, had said at a joint meeting of the All-Pakistan Newspaper Editors Council and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists that Pakistanis wanted their country to be free and to be able to express their thoughts freely and that freedom of the press meant greater freedom for Pakistan.

105. In the new international situation that had recently been taking shape, the United Nations once again had played a pivotal role in settling international conflicts that threatened world peace, achieving substantial progress in the settlement of numerous regional conflicts and paving the way for the independence of Namibia. The Department of Public Information had carried out its work effectively to that end, disseminating information that had increased Member States' awareness of the problems. It was to be hoped that, in future, its programmes would adequately cover such issues as international peace and security, disarmament, peace-keeping operations, decolonization, Namibia, Palestine, the promotion of human rights, the right of peoples to self-determination, the plight of peoples and countries affected by alien domination and occupation, apartheid, social discrimination, the consolidation of democratic processes throughout the world, economic and social development and progress in the establishment of a new world information and communication order.

106. He urged the Department of Public Information to strengthen its Radio Section Unit from Asia and the Pacific, which had the most listeners and broadcast in the most languages but had a very small staff. The Department should also initiate radio broadcasts in Urdu, which could disseminate information about United Nations activities to over 200 million persons in Pakistan and neighbouring countries, and should recruit staff from the Asian countries with a view to observing the principle of geographical representation.

107. While the efficiency of the Department's Television News and Production Services Section and Audio-Visual Materials Unit should be acknowledged, the Photo Unit needed to be improved. It took days and, at times, weeks to obtain new photographs, even though they could be prepared in a few hours. Necessary measures

(Mr. Tarar, Pakistan)

must be taken to correct that situation, as photographs were important for public information activities.

108. He welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 43/60 A (A/44/653) and that of the Joint Inspection Unit for its comprehensive review of public information networks (A/44/329 and A/44/433). He regretted that they had not been submitted for consideration at the session on substantive questions of the Committee on Information. His delegation firmly supported the activities of the United Nations Correspondents' Association, a representative forum of journalists from around the world who worked hard to promote peace and international understanding, and urged the Department of Public Information to provide Association members with the necessary assistance for them to carry out their activities.

109. He also regretted that the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/44/509) did not clarify the basis for allocating certain projects to specific countries, while ignoring others. A case in point was the Prize for Rural Communication awarded by UNESCO and the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC). As the prize was an important incentive, it should not be confined to one particular region, which had seemed to be the case in 1989. Pakistan was another case in point. While it needed technical support, it had not benefited from any IPDC project in 1989. Moreover, UNESCO should expand its activities, particularly those connected with IPDC, in accordance with the particular requirements of the developing countries.

110. He noted with appreciation that in 1989 the Federal Republic of Germany had contributed over \$10 million to IPDC.

111. Mr. ISAKSSON (Director, UNESCO Office of Liaison with the United Nations) said he had been informed that on Friday, 10 November, UNESCO had adopted a new communications strategy. The Director-General of UNESCO had said that that development was of paramount importance for UNESCO, which could thus overcome the bitter controversies of preceding years, and had added that, in adopting the new strategy, the member States had clearly put UNESCO on the road to freedom and solidarity.

112. The new strategy aimed at improving the agency's efficiency by ensuring the free circulation of information nationally and internationally and its broader and more balanced dissemination without impeding freedom of expression in any way. It was also intended to strengthen the communication infrastructures of developing countries, with a view to increasing their participation in the communication process.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.