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Chairman: Mr. Jiří NOSEK (Czechoslovakia).*In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Urabe (Japan) Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

AGENDA ITEM 52

Public information activities of the United Nations: report of the Secretary-General (A/4122, A/4170, A/C.5/L.573) (continued)

1. Mr. CARRIZOSA (Colombia) recalled that at the thirteenth session the Colombian delegation had supported the measures recommended by the Committee of Experts on United Nations Public Information,^{1/} including increased decentralization of the information services, more frequent recourse to the assistance of governmental and non-governmental organizations, private persons and institutions of various kinds, and the establishment of new information centres with more opportunity for local initiative. In resolutions 1086 (XI) and 1335 (XIII), the General Assembly had emphasized the importance of the operations and effectiveness of the information centres and the need to set up others in the new Member States. The Latin-American States, which were anxious to publicize the purposes and activities of the United Nations, had often opposed any reduction in the funds set aside for information activities; on the other hand, they had always stressed the need to ensure the maximum of effectiveness at the lowest possible cost. Effectiveness depended primarily on wise planning.

2. The Secretary-General's report (A/4122) made no reference to the question of the geographical location of the new centres; nevertheless, much still remained to be done in that respect, as the example of Latin America showed. The twenty Member States in that region possessed four centres to which seven Professional officers had been posted; there was also an officer in Mexico City, responsible for editing the *Revista de las Naciones Unidas*, and a Press officer with ECLA at Santiago. However great the professional skill of the persons concerned, there were too few of them to obtain even fair results. The obvious good will of Governments, non-governmental organizations and information media showed that, if only there could be greater decentralization, satisfactory results could be achieved. New centres should therefore be set up, in accordance with the recommendations of the Com-

mittee of Experts, and another Professional officer should be appointed to the ECLA information service. In addition, an officer might be seconded to one of the existing centres who would tour the area, at least once a year, in order to make contact with Latin-American non-governmental organizations and encourage them to set up information programmes. That was the minimum for obtaining satisfactory results at the regional level.

3. A study of the distribution of staff among the information centres showed that there were twenty-three Professional officers in Europe, one in North America, twelve in Asia and the Far East, four in the Middle East and Africa and eight in Latin America. If the posts of regional radio and film officers were added, the total was fifty-three, of whom only twenty-six were in the under-developed countries, although those countries constituted more than two-thirds of the membership of the United Nations. He wondered whether it was really necessary, for example, to appoint an officer to Washington, the capital of a country in which educational activities were highly developed and non-governmental organizations highly active.

4. In connexion with the reorganization of OPI, it was interesting to compare the recommendations of the Committee of Experts with what had actually been done to put them into effect. The Committee had proposed that a Bureau of Planning and Co-ordination should be set up in order to plan and implement the information policy of the Office of Public Information. The Bureau was to consist of six sections, including four regional sections headed by senior Professional officers with special knowledge of the regions which they would have to serve. Unfortunately, as it was at present, the structure of OPI did not conform to that principle: the External Relations Division had not the necessary authority for planning and implementation; moreover, it was hampered by the limitations (funds or staff) which might be imposed on the two other divisions; lastly, its internal organization was based on technical and not geographical qualifications. Any question of equitable geographical distribution apart, it was undeniable that the needs and problems of the different regions of the world should be taken into account in drawing up the programme of work and allocating the funds obtained. Now that there was no longer any "regional sensitivity", the needs of Latin America or of other under-developed areas had not been taken into account during the past year. There had been no improvement worth mentioning in that field. Information media in Latin America had continued to receive the usual services, and the information which they had disseminated in their turn had been merely routine. The extraordinary publicity which the Colombian Press had given to seminars on the participation of women in public life, held at Bogotá, was an exception.

5. The best means of avoiding the waste of money and effort resulting from planning which was too general in character would be to set up a group of officers to

^{1/}See Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 55, document A/3928.

study and supply regularly the real needs of regions which they knew well, and to obtain tangible results with the assistance of information media, centres, non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and private persons. For the four major regions of the world, there might be eight such officers, headed by a Director and an Assistant Director, i.e. ten officers in all instead of the fifteen envisaged in the manning table of the External Relations Division. The five officers left over could be seconded to new information centres, where they would be assisted by local staff. The same would be done in the other divisions. That would be a beginning of decentralization and one means of strengthening the external services. That was a practical proposal which would not involve any additional expenditure.

6. In regard to the visual services, the Secretary-General had said (A/4122, paras. 26 and 27) that the years 1959 and 1960 would be regarded as transitional years; in 1959, six short films would be produced for the United Nations and some of the specialized agencies. In 1958 and 1959, the film services had produced two large-scale films, "Blue Vanguard" and "Power Among Men", the latter being certainly one of the longest documentary films ever made. Thus, practically the entire resources of the section had been devoted to experiments whose success with the public at large was doubtful. He would like to know what the production of the two films had cost, and what their commercial distribution had brought in. Moreover, the Committee of Experts had attached great importance in its report to co-operation between Governments and OPI in producing information films. There was nothing in the Secretary-General's report to indicate that those recommendations had been followed in practice. The general principle of co-operation with Governments had been set forth in General Assembly resolution 1335 (XIII); but neither the Colombian Government nor the Colombian delegation had so far been approached either by OPI or by the information centre at Bogotá.

7. To sum up, the Secretary-General's report did not offer any tangible proof that progress had been made in the direction indicated in resolution 1335 (XIII). That was because there was no planning body within OPI and because the real needs of the different regions of the world, in particular the under-developed regions, were not being systematically examined. In the senior posts, geographical representation was not balanced: in the senior Professional category and higher categories there was no one from Latin America, Asia or Africa. Nevertheless the Committee of Experts had said in paragraph 227 (e) that it attached great importance to ensuring that the OPI reflected broad cultural regions in its staffing pattern.

8. In conclusion, he was in favour of taking up the Secretary-General's proposal^{2/} to set up a consultative body to advise him in matters such as the usefulness and suitability of various projects and, where necessary, to suggest modifications in the programme. The report submitted to the Committee (A/4122) disclosed a situation which made the establishment of such a body justifiable, not to say imperative.

9. Mr. HSUEH (China) said that the Secretary-General had made laudable efforts to implement General Assembly resolution 1335 (XIII). There were, however, certain measures outlined in the report, and some others, which should be given greater consideration.

It was too early to evaluate the actual effects of what had already been done but the Secretary-General would no doubt keep the Fifth Committee and the General Assembly informed.

10. The upward trend of public information expenses (\$137,600 more than in 1959) made it increasingly difficult to give effect to paragraph 278 of the report of the Committee of Experts, where \$4.5 million was considered a reasonable basis for planning. Even allowing for "uncontrollable" costs, the fact was that over the past few years public information expenses had gone beyond the desirable ceiling. As the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions pointed out in its report (A/4170, para. 53) "an effective information programme could be carried out at a cost below the present level". His delegation was therefore prepared to support the United Kingdom proposal (722nd meeting) for a ceiling of \$5 million for the public information budget for 1960.

11. Savings could still be effected without impairing the effectiveness of OPI activities. For instance, under present arrangements, a director of an information centre might be called upon to make a long journey every year for various reasons, such as meetings of directors in New York or home leave. One method of reducing expenses would be to provide for the rotation of directors of centres only between Headquarters and the field, and not between two centres. It would not then be necessary perhaps to hold biennial directors' meetings at Headquarters.

12. Some types of savings, however, were not at all justified by the results. The Chinese language radio staff in OPI had been reduced from five to two, which seriously impaired the quality of the Chinese radio programmes without any significant savings in the budget.

13. The Secretary-General's report made no mention of the interne and fellowship programme in connexion with which the Committee of Experts had made valuable and helpful suggestions as to the criteria for the choice of candidates. His Government attached special importance to those programmes and hoped the criteria adopted would be adhered to scrupulously. If additional criteria should be deemed necessary, they should be submitted to Member States and to the Committee for examination. He also wished to call attention to the requirement for consultations with the Governments concerned in regard to the choice of candidates and stressed that such consultations should always be held.

14. His delegation was glad to note the importance attached to radio programmes and photographic exhibitions, which were wide-spread information media; with regard to television, a medium still restricted in scope, programmes could be developed later, when other more urgent projects had been financed.

15. The establishment of more information centres should receive priority consideration, especially in regions not covered by existing centres. A redeployment of Headquarters staff would enable new centres to be established without appreciable additional cost. At present, out of a total OPI staff of 389, only 166 worked for information centres. In addition to that decentralization measure the services of Secretariat staff from liaison offices or area representatives of the specialized agencies might be utilized. Therefore, it should not be too difficult to establish new centres where such services already existed.

^{2/}Ibid., document A/3945, para. 17.

16. On the whole, the Secretary-General's report was an encouraging one, and his delegation would follow with interest any future efforts to extend and improve public information services.

17. Mr. FEKKES (Netherlands) said that the Committee must decide now whether to continue putting arbitrary ceilings to public information expenditure or to accept the Secretary-General's policy of budget stabilization. As far as he could make out, the USSR draft resolution (A/C.5/L.573) and the United Kingdom proposal reverted to the system of fixing arbitrary ceilings. Since that method had not been very successful in the past, his delegation was inclined to accept the Secretary-General's point of view. Nevertheless, if assurance could be given that the Secretary-General's programme could be carried out with a budget of \$5 million, that sum being regarded not as a ceiling but as the result of a normal reduction of the fund requested, his delegation could support the United Kingdom proposal.

18. The report submitted to the Committee must be regarded as a first step along the road indicated in resolution 1335 (XIII); the programme outlined in the report was sound, but it was to be hoped that future reports would give fuller and more concrete details on the practical measures which might be taken and the possible saving to be effected thereby. A number of important steps had already been taken, and his delegation was particularly interested in the development of co-operation between OPI and other United Nations organs in the field. Annex 1 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/4170) pointed to various possibilities for combining resources, and perhaps certain services, which should be vigorously pursued in co-operation with the specialized agencies.

19. His delegation hoped that the radio broadcasts would be planned systematically on the results of listener research. It also considered that the time had come to approve the funds for the construction of a television studio. He would like to state in conclusion that his delegation was prepared to vote for a resolution commending the Secretary-General for his report, authorizing him to continue his activities along the lines proposed and in the light of the discussion of the Fifth Committee, and requesting him to present a further report to the Committee at its next session.

Mr. Nosek (Czechoslovakia) took the Chair.

20. Mr. VENKATARAMAN (India) recalled the interest his delegation had always taken in the public information activities of the United Nations and its misgivings confirmed by the report of the Committee of Experts, regarding the results achieved and the methods employed. The Secretary-General's report should be appraised in the light of the criteria set forth in the last four preambular paragraphs of resolution 1335 (XIII).

21. The first request made of the Secretary-General had been effectively carried out, particularly as far as the Press was concerned. Objective and factual information had been made available to all the peoples of the world through all appropriate media. Secondly, the Secretary-General should give priority to the use of media of information which ensured the maximum of effectiveness at the lowest possible cost. The Indian delegation noted with satisfaction that Headquarters facilities for media representatives were to be maintained at their present levels. If the number of

accredited correspondents increased, as the Secretary-General anticipated (A/4122, para. 31), additional facilities should be considered. His delegation was glad to see that the existing facilities operated to the satisfaction of the correspondents, who put them to good use and served the interests of the United Nations competently and loyally. The services and facilities made available to information media not represented at Headquarters were inadequate, but he would return to that matter later.

22. The two other objectives of resolution 1335 (XIII) were closely related and might be taken together in analysing the Secretary-General's report. The issue they raised was what steps had been taken to strengthen field operations in line with the repeatedly stated principle that the full co-operation of public and private information media should be enlisted, special attention being given to the needs of the less developed countries. The Secretary-General's report (A/4122, paras. 36 to 47) gave little reason to be satisfied with the work done along those lines. It gave no indication of the duties of the officers who would be posted to Geneva and Washington, nor of the reasons which had led the Secretary-General to give priority to strengthening the staffs of those two centres. The report did not describe how the increased allocation of \$90,000 over 1958 expenditure was to be utilized in the various services. The question of improving library facilities in the centres was only "under consideration" and the recommendation of the Committee of Experts on the interchange of personnel between OPI and the substantive departments had escaped the attention of the Secretary-General. In addition, it was difficult to see why the highly developed centres at Geneva and Washington had been chosen for the task of strengthening co-operation with non-governmental organizations in view of the enormously difficult position of non-governmental organizations in other areas.

23. With regard to the field programmes, India felt that adequate attention had not been paid to the views of the majority of members on the three editions of the United Nations Review. The English version had remained more or less the same; it was too luxurious in presentation and too high in price. It should be printed in a format more appropriate to its content and more suitable for air transport and overseas distribution. His delegation wished to reiterate the importance it attached to the annual appearance of the useful reference work entitled Everyman's United Nations, the latest English edition of which was dated 1956.

24. With respect to the number and location of information centres, he pointed out that General Assembly resolution 1086 (XI) referred to the desirability of establishing information centres in keeping with the principle of regional and linguistic distribution and recommended favourable attention to the establishment of offices in new Member States. However, thirteen of the twenty-seven centres and offices were in the developed countries and only twenty-six out of the fifty-seven officers employed in the centres and offices were assigned to the less developed areas. That situation was not satisfactory and the consensus of opinion at the Fifth Committee's previous session had clearly been that new centres must be added, especially in Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, without additional cost to the United Nations.

25. The Committee of Experts had recommended in paragraphs 230 and 231 of its report the reorganization

of the External Relations Division on a regional basis. In his report, the Secretary-General said that "after very searching exploration", the changes suggested by the Committee of Experts had not proved feasible, and since it was a question which should be left entirely to the Secretary-General's discretion, his delegation would accept the Secretariat's decision in that matter. However, it attached great importance to the structure of the External Relations Division because of its effect on overseas work. Only through a regional structure could the Office of Public Information keep fully informed of the needs of the areas it served; and the offices of the External Relations Division, like the centre directors themselves, should have reasonable competence in all aspects of their work. If the needs of the different areas were not intimately understood, the less developed regions would continue to be neglected.

26. In the same way, attention should be drawn to the need for proper geographical distribution, in regional if not in national terms, of OPI officers at the policy-making level. He did not mean to question the integrity of the present officers; he merely wished to point out, as the Committee of Experts had done, the need to ensure that the membership of the OPI staff should represent the major cultural areas of the world.

27. Despite the very explicit recommendations of the Committee of Experts on films in paragraphs 272 to 274 of its report, the film unit had produced during the year a ninety-minute documentary entitled "Power Among Men", the commercial exploitation of which was not likely to cover the production costs, to which must naturally be added staff remuneration and travel expenses. The whole film programme was misconceived, and his delegation could not approve the cost estimates unless it received assurances that the funds would be used exclusively to produce films on United Nations activities and educational filmstrips. Furthermore, in view of the limited area that a television studio would serve and of the costs involved, his delegation was reluctant, for the time being, to approve the allocations requested for that purpose.

28. The Indian delegation would support any proposal for the establishment of an advisory committee on public information to assist OPI in implementing the recommendations of the Committee of Experts. That would relieve the Fifth Committee of the yearly, time-consuming task of examining OPI's activities. With respect to the training and fellowship programmes, he would like to know what percentage of trainees came from under-developed countries and what steps were taken to consult Governments and non-governmental organizations on the choice of trainees.

29. The report submitted to the Fifth Committee undoubtedly indicated that some progress had been made. Nevertheless it could not be regarded as more than an interim report which should be followed by further reports on the progress achieved in carrying out the recommendations on OPI activities.

30. Mr. RYAN (Australia) drew the Committee's attention to paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Secretary-General's report in which it was pointed out that increases in such "uncontrollable" costs as progressive salary increments, cost of living allowances, common staff costs and other rate increases had been responsible for the steady increase in expenses which had occurred in recent years. Since salary, wage and

related staff costs comprised upwards of 70 per cent of OPI expenditure, the question arose whether the establishment of a rigid fixed ceiling did not require a reduction of staff instead of stabilization of professional staff at the current level, as proposed in the Secretary-General's programme.

31. The Australian delegation would therefore like to be informed of the administrative and financial implications of the two proposals submitted to the Committee before it took a final position. Moreover, it was not quite clear how they were to be implemented. Hence, he would put the following two questions to the representative of the Secretary-General: was it to be assumed that, if the increase in costs of previous years were to continue, stabilization at the current level of professional staff employed in public information activities would entail an increase in expenses? Could the ceiling proposed by the USSR and the United Kingdom be applied without a reduction of staff and, if so, under what other headings could the necessary reduction in costs be achieved?

32. Television programmes of United Nations activities in areas other than North America had expanded considerably in recent years. In view of that important development, the Australian delegation would like to know how much it would cost at present to build a television studio and how long it would take. Moreover, in connexion with an observation by the Secretary-General (A/4122, para. 30, last sentence), it would also like to have a comparative estimate of the income and expenditure which the operation of such a studio would imply.

33. Mr. SZITA (Hungary) observed that OPI's financial position had not improved since the previous session. On the contrary, its expenses had increased steadily and the Secretary-General was requesting \$5.4 million for 1960. In 1956 the Fifth Committee had approved for 1957, 1958 and 1959 the \$4.5 million ceiling proposed by the Advisory Committee and accepted by the Committee of Experts. The Hungarian delegation would therefore support the USSR draft resolution (A/C.5/L.573) because it felt that the measures proposed by the Secretary-General were inadequate. As pointed out by the Advisory Committee (A/4170, para. 54), those proposals represented at best a possible slowing down of further increases of expenditure on public information activities. The recommendations made by the experts and various proposals submitted during the debate had produced numerous specific suggestions which should make it possible to remain within the \$4.5 million ceiling.

34. While he did not wish to go into details, he would merely request that, generally speaking, Member States should be given a more active role for, as pointed out by the Experts, the United Nations information programme could only supplement the efforts of Governments. Duplication should be avoided and information activities expanded in countries which required assistance and not in those which had national services capable of disseminating information on the United Nations.

35. It was unfortunate that the recommendations of the Experts concerning radio broadcasts had not been applied. The Committee of Experts had expressed a doubt whether the present level of intensity of broadcasts and their reception qualities produced results commensurate with the financial outlay and the effort

of the staff members. The Committee of Experts had further recommended that OPI should ascertain the desires of the Member States in the matter of unrelayed broadcasts. For example, unrelayed broadcasts in the Hungarian language did not reach the Hungarian public. Moreover, they were broadcast by an organization notorious for its dissemination of propaganda hostile to the Hungarian people—which hardly served to enhance the prestige of the United Nations. Furthermore, the Hungarian Government had never been consulted regarding those broadcasts. Much importance was attached by Hungary to the public being adequately informed about United Nations affairs. The correspondent of the Hungarian Radio broadcasted daily from United Nations Headquarters during General Assembly sessions and the Government was now studying the possibility of ensuring that the Hungarian Radio broadcasted news from Headquarters throughout the year.

36. The fact that the principle of geographical distribution was not properly applied was regrettable. Since that point was the subject of a separate agenda item he would not dwell on it but would merely request that the staff of information centres should be recruited from among persons who had a perfect knowledge of the culture and language of the countries to which they were assigned, and preferably persons who were nationals of the countries concerned. Moreover, there would be financial advantages to such a policy since it would entail savings in home leave travel costs.

37. Generally speaking, the Hungarian delegation believed that a fixed ceiling of \$4.5 million would contribute greatly to the stabilization of the budget.

38. Mr. KATZIN (Acting Head of the Office of Public Information), replying to the questions raised by the Japanese representative at the 722nd meeting, said that the thirty-nine General Service employees referred to were not in excess of the established posts in OPI but were engaged in revenue-producing services in the Sales and Circulation Section and the Visitor's Service (part D of the budget).

39. The Japanese representative had asked why the higher ranking personnel of OPI had to be nationals of countries other than Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Secretary-General had stated his position on the question of the geographical distribution of staff, which was a matter of over-all staff policy where due consideration had to be given to the acquired rights of staff members of proven competence. Due regard would be given to the principle of geographical distribution when the vacant post of Under-Secretary was filled.

40. With reference to the criteria governing the size of information centres, he said that until 1955 the General Assembly had determined the number of staff assigned to the various centres, which were classified in three groups according as they were staffed by six, four or two staff members. In 1955 the General Assembly had authorized the Secretary-General to modify those criteria on the basis of the needs of each centre.

41. Referring to the six films produced by OPI, he said that the film "Exposure" (ten minutes) on refugees had been produced for the World Refugee Year at an approximate cost of \$9,000, \$6,000 of which had been provided by the United Nations and \$3,000 by World Refugee Year funds. Distribution costs would be borne by the national committees for World Refugee Year; up to the present seventy prints had been ordered.

The film "In Our Hands" (ten minutes), commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the International Labour Organisation, had cost \$9,000, of which the United Nations had provided \$3,000 and the ILO \$6,000.

42. A popular science film (thirty minutes) on the peaceful uses of atomic energy was in production. Initial costs in 1959 would amount to \$14,000, \$5,000 of which would be provided by the United Nations and \$9,000 by IAEA. The additional expenses incurred in 1960 would depend upon the additional financial contributions which the participating agencies might wish to make.

43. The thirty-minute "Water Film" would be produced jointly with WHO in 1959-1960 at a cost of \$60,000, \$20,000 of which had been pledged by the United Nations and interested agencies.

44. A revised edition of "Workshop for Peace" (thirty minutes), originally produced in 1952, was in production. The purpose of the film was to explain the functions of the United Nations and its various bodies; it would cost between \$5,000 and \$6,000.

45. Lastly, OPI was preparing a series of four films for television and group showings, on the activities of United Nations family in Asia, with particular emphasis on the work of ECAFE. The films would be produced in collaboration with the specialized agencies substantively and financially, and would utilize local production facilities to the extent that they were available. They were expected to involve an expenditure of \$15,000 in 1959 and \$45,000 in 1960.

46. The figures given were exclusive of overhead expenses and salaries of staff members. It was difficult to establish precisely the number of working hours spent by each staff member on the production of each film since the staff worked on a number of films simultaneously.

47. Replying to the representatives who had referred to the film "Power Among Men", he said that work on the film had begun in 1958 at the request of the Under-Secretary for Public Information, and had been completed in March 1959. The sum of \$40,000 which the film had already earned from distribution over television networks should be deducted from the production cost of \$53,000. The film had been exhibited in a large number of countries and had been awarded prizes in the United States, and at Venice and in Moscow. It had been or would be shown commercially in the United States, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

48. Reverting to the questions raised by the Japanese representative, he furnished particulars regarding the financing of the publication of pamphlets written or adapted in the field. Up to the present time the information centres had mainly requested local language editions of basic information publications produced at Headquarters. During the first nine months of 1959, some \$80,000 had been spent on the production of pamphlets for the centres, or 80 per cent of total OPI printing costs for the period (exclusive of the three editions of the United Nations Review, the United Nations Yearbook and Everyman's United Nations). Forty-six languages were represented in the pamphlets produced in 1959. As the Secretary-General had indicated in his report, the centres would, within their budgetary possibilities, turn their attention to the production of pamphlets written or adapted in the field to

supplement their editions of the basic publications; the Secretary-General envisaged an outlay of \$20,000 to \$25,000 for that purpose.

49. Acting on the recommendations of the experts, the Secretary-General had increased the number of fellowships to thirty-one (as compared with seven in 1959). The fellowship-holders were selected by a committee on the basis of recommendations received from information centres and technical assistance resident representatives. The fellowship programme had start-

ed on 16 October 1959 and would last six weeks. The student interne programme had been reduced from eight to six weeks; thirty students from as many countries had taken part in the programme (from 24 July to 3 September 1959). The Civil Servant Interne Programme had been reduced by two weeks; eighteen civil servants from eighteen different countries had spent six weeks at Headquarters between 5 June and 16 July 1959.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.