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- (b) Relevant sections of the reports of the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other specialized agencies, requested in General Assembly resolution 1313 A (XIII) 93

President : Mr. Daniel COSÍO VILLEGAS (Mexico).

Present :

Representatives of the following States: Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Poland, Spain, Sudan, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Venezuela.

Observers for the following Member States: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary; India, Israel, Italy, Japan, Philippines, Romania, Yugoslavia.

Observers for the following non-member States: Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland.

Representatives of the following specialized agencies: International Labour Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

AGENDA ITEM 10

Freedom of information (E/3204, E/3205 and Add.1, E/3206 and Add.1, E/3224, E/3234; E/L.824, E/L.825) (*continued*) :

- (a) Report by the Secretary-General on media of information in under-developed countries (Council resolutions 574 D (XIX) and 643 (XXIII));
- (b) Relevant sections of the reports of the Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other specialized agencies, requested in General Assembly resolution 1313 A (XIII)

1. Mr. CHENG Paonan (China) reviewed briefly the efforts made by the United Nations in the field of freedom of information and said that none of the steps taken

thus far had been effective. His delegation considered it of vital importance to ensure the free flow of information not only within each country but across national frontiers. It would support a declaration on freedom of information along the lines proposed in the joint draft resolution (E/L.824), without committing itself to the specific terms of the declaration. Although it would not be legally binding, a declaration would exert great moral influence on Governments, information enterprises, professional associations and public opinion. Moreover, it would not exclude the adoption of a convention on freedom of information, and even if both a declaration and a convention were ultimately adopted additional measures would still be needed to ensure freedom to receive and impart information within countries and across their borders.

2. His delegation attached importance to such technical aspects of freedom of information as low postage rates for newspapers, periodicals and books, low press cable rates, an increase in the quantity of newsprint available and a reduction in its price, and the training of journalists. It considered, moreover, that one effective means of promoting freedom of information was the publication of progress reports on the subject, including the laws and regulations adopted in the various countries, judicial decisions, the formation of writers' and journalists' associations and of newspaper trade unions. Even after the adoption of a declaration on freedom of information, the United Nations should complete the drafting of conventions on the question, including a convention on the gathering and transmission of news and one on the international transmission of news and the right of correction. Finally, an international group of journalists should draft a code of ethics of writers and journalists with a view to preventing abuses of freedom of information. As a measure of technical assistance, a draft law on libel, with basic articles applicable to all countries, should also be prepared.

3. With regard to the resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights (see E/3224), he asked how the Secretariat intended to carry out the provisions of resolution 1 (XV), section B, paragraph 2 (b). He would request a separate vote on the words "undistorted and accurate" in the first preambular paragraph in the resolution recommended for adoption by the Council in resolution 2 (XV): the veracity and accuracy of information did not depend on press cable rates. Lastly, he took exception to the second sentence of the passage quoted from the report of the Committee on Freedom of Information in the second preambular paragraph of resolution 2 (XV): the action suggested would discriminate against correspondents accredited to organizations other than the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

4. Mr. SHANAHAN (New Zealand) said that, despite the initial enthusiasm shown by Member States in the matter of freedom of information, little progress had been made, and there was not much ground for hoping that the draft Convention on Freedom of Information would make much headway at the fourteenth session of the General Assembly, since Member States had so far failed to agree on a basic approach to the question.

5. New Zealand was among those countries which considered that the free flow of information was best promoted when there was a minimum of control, and it felt that there were other steps that could be taken internationally to help countries to enjoy fuller access to information. The expansion and improvement of information media depended, of course, on the spread of literacy and the availability of public and private resources to establish adequate information facilities. The activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in that connexion were to be commended. He took issue with the suggestion of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Universal Postal Union (UPU) that the development of information media was essentially a domestic and not an international problem. The action of the 1958 Administrative Telegraph and Telephone Conference of ITU in adopting proposals for better and cheaper facilities for the transmission of press messages seemed to be a practical step towards the improvement of information media.

6. International assistance in promoting better information media should be provided in response to the expressed need of a given country or group of countries. Regional seminars held in co-operation with the specialized agencies could be most useful. Similarly, training institutes financed by the United Nations Special Fund would contribute greatly to the objective sought and could be co-ordinated with the activities already being undertaken by UNESCO. Under the Colombo Plan, New Zealand had responded to a request for assistance in the information field from the Government of North Borneo, and students from Asia were being trained in New Zealand in the field of visual information media.

7. Commenting on the resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights, he suggested that the new programme outlined in resolution 1 (XV), section A, should be incorporated in the general United Nations technical assistance programme. With regard to the regular review of developments relating to freedom of information referred to in resolution 1 (XV), section B, he thought that the survey might more appropriately be carried out by a special rapporteur or expert. In connexion with resolution 2 (XV), he observed that a reduction in international press cable rates would do much to facilitate freedom of information.

8. While the proposal for a declaration on freedom of information embodied in the joint draft resolution (E/L.824) represented an interesting initiative, it would not be practicable to discuss it fully at the current session. Accordingly, the New Zealand delegation

favoured the French amendment (E/L.825), which would defer detailed consideration of it until the Council's twenty-eighth session.

9. Mr. ARKADEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) declared that at its thirteenth session the General Assembly had taken two very important decisions concerning specific action by the United Nations in the field of information: it had decided to undertake a detailed discussion of the draft Convention on Freedom of Information at its fourteenth session, and it had requested United Nations organs concerned with the question to focus attention on specific measures of technical assistance to under-developed countries, particularly the provision of technical and financial resources, which would enable them to develop their information facilities. In view of the difficulties of the under-developed countries, many of which had only recently shaken off the yoke of colonial rule, and of many Non-Self-Governing Territories where political factors had obstructed the normal development of information media, that second decision of the Assembly was a crucial one.

10. The joint draft resolution (E/L.824) not only failed utterly to take that crucial decision into account but, what was even more serious, it would reverse the Assembly's decision to reach agreement on a convention on freedom of information. The USSR was not convinced by the assertion in the final preambular paragraph of the draft resolution that the adoption of a declaration on freedom of information would be without prejudice to the Assembly's action on the draft Convention: it was a known fact that certain Member States were opposed to a convention because it would be legally binding on all signatories, and had exerted every effort to prevent the Assembly from considering such an effective instrument. Those States were clearly trying to nullify the Assembly's decision and, by foisting on it a mere proclamation of principles without binding effect, to cause a regression in United Nations activities in the field of freedom of information. Indeed, the United States initiative in proposing a draft declaration would be restrictive as compared with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

11. The Council had been placed in a difficult position by the failure of the Commission on Human Rights to discharge its obligations. Under pressure from certain delegations, the Commission had done nothing with regard to technical assistance to under-developed countries in developing their information media and had made only one useful recommendation, the one relating to lower press cable rates. The resolution adopted by the Commission on the initiative of the United States (resolution 1 (XV) reduced all technical assistance activity to asking the Council to request UNESCO to study the question of assistance to the under-developed countries in the information field and report to it in 1961. The resolution was sterile, confusing and bureaucratic; the Commission was in fact throwing the whole urgent question back into the lap of UNESCO, whereas the Assembly had asked the Council for specific recommendations regarding technical assistance to under-developed countries in developing their information

media. Indeed, for the Commission on Human Rights and other subsidiary organs of the United Nations to adopt so cavalier an attitude towards General Assembly decisions was tantamount to insubordination. It was the duty of the Council to work out concrete measures to facilitate technical assistance to the under-developed countries in the field of information, and to reject all obstacles to the achievement of that purpose and all diversionary tactics such as that initiated by the United States in submitting the draft resolution in document E/L.824.

12. Mr. Zahiruddin AHMED (Pakistan) supported the substance of the two resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights. With regard to the report on developments in the field of freedom of information, to be presented in 1961 (resolution 1 (XV), section B, paragraph 2 (b)), although the Secretary-General would be in the best position to obtain the necessary information from Governments, the appointment of a rapporteur or a group of international experts for that purpose would be acceptable alternatives. The action suggested in resolution 2 (XV) was long overdue, and he hoped that the ITU Conference of Plenipotentiaries, to be held in 1959, would agree on a reduction in international press cable rates.

13. He had been encouraged by the nature and scope of the proposals put forward by the various specialized agencies in their reports on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 1313 A (XIII) and, in particular, by the prospect of far-reaching results arising from UNESCO's proposals. Rigorous action would be needed to implement them, and he hoped that further resources for that purpose would be available from the Special Fund.

14. Pakistan depended for its information on radio, press and publications. Although there had been a substantial increase in radio receiving sets, their number was still inadequate by any standards. While the situation could undoubtedly be remedied by the expanded production of cheap sets, that initiative would not be economically feasible at the present time without outside assistance. Prevailing rates for cable and wireless messages were not uniform and were very high, with the result that news coverage was inadequate; a reduction in those rates by international action would be an important step in promoting freedom of information. Moreover, the main reason for the small number of newspapers in under-developed countries was the limited supply and high cost of newsprint; international action could be taken in that respect also. An international school of journalism might be desirable for training news personnel, and international assistance would be warmly welcomed for the development of the film industry and the training of technicians to produce documentary and newsreel films.

15. Pakistan would support all efforts to strengthen freedom of information. The joint draft resolution represented such an effort and should be given full attention at the Council's next session. Pakistan accepted the assurance of the sponsors that they had no intention of delaying or deferring United Nations action on the draft Convention on Freedom of Information.

16. Mr. SCHURMANN (Netherlands), referring to the report by Mr. W. Wallace on the protection of news and other press information (E/3204, annex), expressed the view that no action at the international level was required in respect of that protection. Given the differences between the legal systems of the various States, it would be impossible to take any such action without upsetting the free flow of news. There therefore seemed no reason for the Council to make any recommendations on the subject, which was being efficiently dealt with by the Permanent Committee of the International Union for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works.

17. With regard to the resolutions adopted by the Commission on Human Rights, his delegation endorsed resolution 1 (XV), section A, paragraph 2, which would place on UNESCO the main burden of drafting a programme for the development of the information enterprises of under-developed countries. The two years of study granted to UNESCO would be needed to increase the scope and improve the efficiency of the present plans of that agency relating to information media. The programme ultimately accepted would have to be financed not only by UNESCO but under the technical assistance programmes; the Netherlands Government was prepared to accept the implications of that need both in the Council and in UNESCO. Two features of the programme should be given the highest priority: the training of news personnel and of other staff for mass communication, and the development of radio and television. Improvement in the equipment for mass communication media would have little effect unless it was utilized by well-trained executives and operators. Moreover, the possession of professional skill would create an *esprit de corps* which would strengthen the determination of the personnel concerned to uphold freedom of information.

18. The Netherlands Government commended the establishment, with the aid of UNESCO, of the Institute for Higher Studies in Journalism attached to the University of Strasbourg, to train journalists and teachers from the Middle East and Africa in methods of establishing and operating schools of journalists in their own countries. It was also encouraging that UNESCO was to assist in the establishment of a similar centre for Latin America in Quito, and that assistance for a centre in South-East Asia was being planned.

19. Action to develop radio and television in the under-developed countries would have to be increased and carried out more systematically, with greater financial means and on the basis of a comprehensive programme. The Netherlands also attached particular value to the proposal of the Mexican member of the Committee on Freedom of Information for the establishment of regional press agencies in groups of co-operating States as an aid to the free flow of accurate news.

20. His delegation would vote in favour of section A of the draft resolution recommended in resolution 1 (XV) of the Commission on Human Rights. It reserved its position in respect of paragraph 2 (b) of section B, under which the Secretary-General would be called upon

to consider unverified information rather than official documents emanating from Governments. It also took issue with the conclusion of the Committee on Freedom of Information (E/CN.4/762, para. 12 (a)) that the adoption of an international convention on freedom of information would lay the foundation for future United Nations work in that field. On the contrary, it shared the opinion of the French member of the Committee that United Nations action should for the time being be mainly, if not entirely, directed towards the study and solution of technical problems. Discussion of a convention on freedom of information could be of value only if there were a sufficient measure of similarity between the legislations of the different States to permit the assumption that legal formulae were rooted in a common conception of the relationship between the State and the individual. Without freedom of political opposition and recognition of the right of the individual or of the group to express views diverging from official tenets, such a convention would be lacking in substance; it would be subject to such different interpretations on both sides of the Iron Curtain that it could not possibly guarantee general acceptance of freedom of information.

21. The proposal for a draft declaration on freedom of information (E/L.824) might provide the means of breaking the deadlock on the question and should be given serious study. Accordingly, the Netherlands would support the French amendment (E/L.825) to defer discussion of it until the Council's twenty-eighth session.

22. Mr. VOUTOV (Bulgaria) observed that it was clear from the agenda that the Council was supposed to be discussing not freedom of information in general but only freedom of information as it related to the under-developed countries. Hence the joint draft resolution was entirely out of place. Furthermore, its purpose was obviously to prevent the adoption of the draft Convention on Freedom of Information, to which the United States delegation had expressed its opposition both at the thirteenth session of the General Assembly and at the current session of the Council. There was no need for such a declaration inasmuch as its substance was already covered by article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Council should not waste time discussing a declaration, but should do everything it could to facilitate the discussion of the draft Convention by the fourteenth session of the General Assembly.

23. Mr. TARDIFF (Mexico) expressed the view that, regardless of the action which the Council or the General Assembly might take on the draft Convention, it was essential that a declaration on freedom of information should be adopted. Such a declaration would do much to strengthen friendly relations among peoples and to ensure respect for human rights. His own country had a deep-rooted tradition of respect for the principle of freedom of expression, a tradition repeatedly reflected in the statements of its political leaders. President López Mateos, for example, had said during his election campaign that freedom was the most valued heritage of the Mexican people, and that the only restriction on the freedom of one individual could be respect for the freedom of another.

24. An informed public opinion was essential to the preservation of freedom. It was with that consideration in mind that the sponsors of the draft resolution had drawn up the draft declaration. Some delegations objected to it on the grounds that it set forth only abstract principles rather than specific obligations. Yet the experience of the United Nations had been that whenever the possibility of a convention was discussed so many objections to its adoption were raised that it was obviously unrealistic to try to impose one at the present time. As a first step, therefore, the United Nations should establish a doctrine which would awaken nations to the significance of the principle of freedom of information. Only then could a convention be effective.

25. Mr. VIAUD (France) observed that the major problems faced by the under-developed countries in connexion with freedom of information were the lack of qualified technical personnel and the absence, owing partly to the multiplicity of dialects spoken in many such countries, of a wide reading public. In paragraphs 20 to 22 of document E/3206, UNESCO outlined a pilot project for South-East Asia designed to overcome those difficulties. It should be encouraged to pursue that project, but should give a detailed estimate of its financial implications, as also of those of the projects mentioned in the following paragraph, and should initiate them with its own resources before turning to the Special Fund or the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance for help. Non-governmental organizations and research institutions might usefully be associated with UNESCO in carrying out those projects.

26. His delegation fully supported resolution 1 (XV) of the Commission on Human Rights. It approved of the draft resolution recommended in resolution 2 (XV) in principle, but thought that it might have to be revised in the light of the comments submitted by ITU in document E/3234.

27. The development of information media in under-developed countries should be closely related to their general economic and social development, for if the proper balance was not maintained more harm than good might result. The abuses of freedom of information in the developed countries to which the report of the Committee on Freedom of Information (E/CN.4/762 and Corr.1) referred should be taken into account with a view to preventing their occurrence in the under-developed countries. Abuses by the commercial press were, however, only one of two dangers: the other was the danger inherent in a state-controlled and state-financed press. The under-developed countries must be assisted in learning to steer a middle course between those two extremes.

28. His Government considered it essential that the Council should not abandon consideration of the draft Convention, and hoped that when it was eventually adopted all would accede to it. A declaration such as that envisaged in the joint draft resolution might be a first step in that direction, but freedom of information must be governed by certain principles. For example, his delegation agreed that all media of information should report honestly, as provided in article IV of the

draft declaration, but it might well be asked who was to judge the accuracy of the information transmitted. Certainly it should not be the State, for that would negate the entire principle of freedom of information. The two safeguards that were required were a code of ethics, on the one hand, and, on the other, recognition of the right to demand the rectification of inaccuracies and the duty of information media to make such rectification.

29. While he supported the joint draft resolution, he felt that no decision should be taken on it until the twenty-eighth session, when delegations would have had sufficient time to study the text of the draft declaration. It was important to avoid taking any hasty step which might prejudice the General Assembly's action on the draft Convention.

30. Mr. ANIEL QUIROGA (Spain) said that freedom of information, as the guarantee of freedom of expression, had always been recognized in Spain as one of the inalienable natural rights of the individual. The *Fuero de los Españoles*, which guaranteed the exercise of those rights to all Spaniards, was one of the basic laws of the land. Foreign journalists in Spain enjoyed the same freedom and guarantees as their Spanish colleagues. The only restrictions on freedom of information were those required for the security of the State and the protection of society. In accordance with those principles he could say that on the whole his delegation favoured the two draft resolutions recommended by the Commission on Human Rights, although it might have reservations about certain details.

31. With regard to the joint draft resolution, he was confident that the first four preambular paragraphs would be acceptable to all members of the Council. Spain's position in favour of the draft Convention on Freedom of Information, which was the subject of the fifth preambular paragraph, was set forth in document A/3868, and the competent Spanish authorities were now engaged in preparing their Government's reply to the comments made on that subject during the thirteenth session of the General Assembly. His delegation thought that the text of the draft resolution might be more acceptable if it were amended in such a way as to leave no possibility of its being interpreted as prejudging in any way the resolution to be adopted by the Assembly at its fourteenth session. As there was still the French amendment to be considered, he would reserve his delegation's position on the draft resolution until the Council had before it the definitive text.

32. Mr. PHILLIPS (United States of America), replying to the comments made on the draft resolution, of which his delegation was a sponsor, pointed out that article IV of the draft declaration provided for protection against the abuses to which the Venezuelan representative had referred, in accordance with the principle that freedom of information without a corresponding sense of responsibility was licence. The last sentence of article II reflected the same principle. Another significant point raised by Venezuela was that the means used to promote freedom of information would necessarily vary according to the economic and political conditions prevailing in

each country. It was for that reason that the declaration was in general terms.

33. He did not think it was necessary to establish a special body to report on the status of freedom of information in Member States, as suggested by the Afghan representative (1061st meeting), for that question was covered in section B of the draft resolution recommended in resolution 1 (XV) of the Commission on Human Rights. Similarly he would point out that the Afghan representative had not been speaking on behalf of all the small countries when he had said that the effect of the draft declaration would be to jeopardize their interests. In fact, one of co-sponsors, namely, Costa Rica, was in that category. Mexico, moreover, had always vigorously championed the rights of the smaller countries and would be unlikely to sponsor a draft resolution which it thought might work to their detriment. Finally, his delegation could find nothing in the records to show that the question of a declaration on freedom of information had already been considered and rejected by the United Nations, as the Afghan representative had said.

34. He would like to emphasize once again, for the benefit of all those who still harboured any doubts regarding the purpose of the draft declaration, that it was submitted entirely on its own merits, without prejudice to action by the General Assembly on the draft Convention, and that the two were not incompatible. If that was not made clear by the wording of the last preambular paragraph, the sponsors would be glad to redraft it.

35. The United Kingdom representative (1061st meeting) had expressed doubts about the wisdom of adopting section B of the draft resolution in resolution 1 (XV) in view of the division of opinion on the subject of freedom of information. Yet the Council could not adopt a practice of refraining from taking action whenever there were differences of opinion among delegations. It was the duty of the United Nations to maintain a continuing interest in the question of freedom of information; the adoption of the two draft resolutions recommended by the Commission of Human Rights should facilitate that task.

36. His delegation fully realized that the question was an important one which required serious consideration and, speaking on behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, he was prepared to accept the French amendment (E/L.825) on the understanding that such action would make it possible for the Council to go into the matter more thoroughly at its twenty-eighth session.

37. Mr. T. G. MENON (India) said that his country attached considerable importance to the question of freedom of information. The press in India enjoyed a full measure of freedom, short of libel and defamation, and such difficulties as it encountered were the result of technical handicaps rather than political factors. Like those of any other less developed country, India's requirements in the field of information were for professional training and methods and techniques appropriate to the less developed countries. In that connexion, the New Zealand representative had rightly stated that there

should be an institute for journalism; the International Labour Organisation (ILO) had a special role to play in the establishment of such an institution.

38. The important media of mass communication, namely, inexpensive books, radio sets, press and films, were fairly well developed in India. Nevertheless, radio coverage was not uniformly good, and there were considerable areas without any reception at all or where only receivers beyond the means of the inhabitants could be used. The improvement of the radio network and its extension to the mass of the inhabitants was a technical matter which depended upon the availability of financial resources. Facilities and equipment were also required for the development of the film industry.

39. A major difficulty for the less developed countries was the considerable disparity in press cable rates; the United Nations might therefore take the initiative in drafting an international convention for the purpose of ensuring low rates. Another major obstacle was the lack of radio receiving sets at a cost within the reach of the average inhabitant in the less developed countries; UNESCO should give high priority to its projects designed to assist the under-developed countries with that particular problem.

40. It had been suggested in the Committee on Freedom of Information that equality should be sought in the gathering and distribution of news through the setting up or expansion of news agencies by groups of countries speaking one of the major languages of the world. While the suggestion was worth considering, the language problem was bound to present a serious difficulty.

41. The adoption of the draft Convention on Freedom of Information to be considered by the General Assembly would constitute proof that the States Members of the United Nations were determined to promote the free flow of accurate information.

42. Mr. PAZHWAQ (Afghanistan) replying to the representative of China, stated that he had said that a declaration on freedom of information was not a new idea, and was in fact a very old one. It had not been discussed because when the idea had been presented it had met with an immediate and strong opposition. Hence the statement of the delegation of Afghanistan had expressed the view of the majority as to the reaction that could be expected in the General Assembly if the issue was proposed again.

43. He had understood the representative of Bulgaria to say that it was the intention of the sponsors of the draft declaration to hinder discussion of the draft Convention on Freedom of Information. He had never cast doubt on anyone's intentions, but he had said that the declaration would disturb an atmosphere which the General Assembly had at last found favourable for the discussion of the draft Convention.

44. The representative of Mexico had said that it would be better not to have a convention which would be adopted today, only to be rejected at a later stage. Mr. Pazhwak asked what forces could bring about a convention today which would be unacceptable tomorrow. There were some who thought that the draft

Convention would be rejected because it was limited in scope. Those who thought it limited should use their influence to achieve a convention that would be acceptable and that would last forever. What was being suggested now was that there should be no convention at all, and the Afghan delegation was opposed to that.

45. Afghanistan was prepared to go further than it had done at the 1061st meeting when it had agreed to the spirit and the letter of the draft declaration. It was now prepared to propose that, if the United States and the co-sponsors did not intend the supersession of the draft Convention, there should be both a declaration and a convention, the declaration being placed on the cover of the convention in block letters. That showed that Afghanistan was not opposed to the draft declaration.

46. The representative of France said that progress should be made step by step. No one disagreed with that, but what was now proposed was not a step forward. First, there had been the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, then the General Assembly had decided that it should go further and have an international instrument. To have merely another declaration would be a retrograde step.

47. The question of a deadlock had been mentioned. For the Afghan delegation there was no deadlock, especially after the decision of the General Assembly in which a majority had decided to discuss and prepare for signature a convention. However, a small minority was opposed to that, and therefore there seemed to be a deadlock where none existed.

48. Bulgaria had mentioned that steps should be taken to give countries technical assistance and radio receivers. That would be appreciated by the under-developed countries, but radio sets were not a satisfactory solution in themselves as they exposed a country to high-powered propaganda and misrepresentation. What was needed was a convention on freedom of information to prevent that.

49. He had been most impressed by the statement that the United States was ready to consider suggestions. Both sides seemed to agree that the question was one which should be decided by the General Assembly, but he thought it was the desirability of a declaration that should be decided upon, not the declaration itself.

50. He reminded the Council that in the first stages of the discussion of the draft Convention, the countries which now wanted a declaration had said that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was sufficient, and that there was no need for a further declaration. Now that a convention was supported by a majority in the United Nations, that argument was forgotten and some thought that another declaration was necessary.

51. Mr. SCHWELB (Secretariat) said that the Secretary-General would have no difficulty in implementing paragraph 2 (a) of resolution 1 (XV), section B, subject to the financial implications which such implementation might involve, if, as interpreted by the United States representative, the information sought would be based primarily on official and public sources — i.e., national or international authorities.

52. The Secretary-General's views regarding the implementation of paragraph 2 (b) were set out in the annex to document E/3224, and represented the application of a consistent policy of the Secretary-General and the United Nations itself. That position was unchanged. If paragraph 2 (b) was adopted in its present form, the Secretary-General would not have the report in question prepared by his permanent staff but would, if that solution was acceptable to the Council, entrust the task to a consultant and transmit his report to the Council.

53. With regard to the comments of ITU (see E/3234), a formula acceptable to the latter had been worked out in co-operation with UNESCO and ITU, and was available to members of the Council.

54. With regard to the Afghan representative's questions concerning paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Secretary-General's report on media of information in under-developed countries (E/3205), the United Nations and the specialized agencies had been dealing with the problem since 1952. In fact, the Secretariat had prepared, jointly with the secretariat of UNESCO, a report¹ which contained suggestions for possible action by UNESCO and the Economic and Social Council.

55. Mr. BEHRSTOCK (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), speaking at the invitation of the PRESIDENT, said that if the Council adopted the draft resolution proposed by the Commission on Human Rights in its resolution 1 (XV) his organization would accept the functions entrusted to it, because the aims of the proposed survey were completely in accord with the fundamental constitutional aim of UNESCO of promoting the free flow of information through the means of mass communication. Moreover, the UNESCO General Conference had firmly committed UNESCO to the policy of assisting the United Nations in its effort to develop media of information in the under-developed countries. UNESCO shared the Secretary-General's view that the most effective and realistic way of drawing up a programme of concrete action for the development of information media was by means of meetings in the regions concerned. That approach was embodied in UNESCO's programme for

1959-1960 as approved by its General Conference. Accordingly a first regional meeting would be held in Bangkok early in 1960 to draw up a programme for the development of information media in the South-East Asian region. Representatives of the Governments concerned, experts in the field of mass communication, the United Nations, interested specialized agencies and international non-governmental organizations would be invited to attend. If that meeting yielded positive results, similar meetings might be held for Latin America, Africa and the Middle East, and would be financed out of the budget of the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance. In view of the time element, however, only the regional meetings for South-East Asia and Latin America could be held before the summer of 1961, the time-limit for the submission of the UNESCO survey. UNESCO would give high priority and great care to that survey, which it hoped would provide an effective basis for a programme of technical assistance to the under-developed countries in the field of mass communication.

56. Mr. SAPOZHNIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that a number of delegations had indicated their desire for action by the Council based on the provisions of General Assembly resolution 1313 (XIII). A few, however, were determined that the Council should disregard the General Assembly's decision. They had failed to present any cogent arguments in favour of their proposal concerning a draft declaration on freedom of information. While he did not question the motives of some of the sponsors of the joint draft resolution, he felt that the United States representative was wrong in saying that the proposal for the draft declaration had been submitted without prejudice to any action which the General Assembly might take with respect to the draft Convention on Freedom of Information. If the proposal was adopted by the Council, the General Assembly would receive the draft declaration at its fourteenth session. It would then have either to disregard the Council's action and not consider the draft declaration, or to reverse its own previous decision concerning the draft Convention. That would be the practical effect of the proposal in the joint draft resolution, which was therefore unacceptable to the USSR.

¹ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Seventeenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 12, document E/2534.*

The meeting rose at 7.5 p.m.