

GENERAL
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GENERALE

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9 December 1946

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

CALLING OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

REPORT OF THE THIRD COMMITTEE

Rapporteur: Mrs. Aase LIONAES (Norway)

1. During the first part of the first session of the General Assembly, the delegation of the Philippine Republic presented a draft resolution concerning the calling of an International Press Conference (document A/BUR/24). On the recommendation of the General Committee, the General Assembly decided to place this question on the agenda of the second part of its first session.
2. On 31 October 1946, at its forty-sixth plenary meeting, the General Assembly referred this question to the Third Committee.
3. The delegation of the Philippine Republic submitted a new draft resolution (document A/C.3/76) which came before the Third Committee on 20 November 1946.
4. The Chairman reminded the Committee that, under the terms of the Charter and of the resolution of the Economic and Social Council establishing the Commission on Human Rights and empowering it to establish a Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press, the United Nations was committed to major responsibility in that field.
5. The representative of the Philippine Republic emphasized that free interchange of information and unlimited opportunities for the peoples of the world to learn more about each other were the surest ways of dispelling suspicion and promoting international understanding. His delegation had proposed the new resolution because it believed that the radio and motion pictures, in their purely informational aspects, must be considered together with the press; it therefore proposed an International Information Conference.

6. During the discussion reference was made to the importance of co-operation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in planning the Conference.

7. The representative of the United States of America supported the proposal and welcomed the fact that the Conference would discuss all information media, including radio and films.

8. The representative of the United Kingdom also welcomed the suggestion that the Conference should cover all media. He agreed that the Economic and Social Council should be given the task of convening the Conference, and considered that it should be held independently of any meeting of the General Assembly. He suggested that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, certain non-governmental organizations, press publishers, as well as relevant trade unions should be represented.

With regard to the agenda of the Conference, he submitted the following for consideration as practical objectives:

(a) To promote the widest and freest possible exchange of incoming and outgoing news, without government censorship in times of peace.

(b) To extend to bona fide press, film and radio correspondents, without discrimination, all reasonable facilities to travel and reside in the respective territories of the signatory Governments, with complete freedom to carry on their activities and with equal access to all sources of news.

(c) To extend, within their respective territories and without discrimination, the freest and widest possible opportunities for the distribution of news by bona fide news services.

(d) To extend access to available communication facilities to bona fide correspondents and news agencies without discrimination as to nationality.

9. The Chilean representative wished to add a fifth point to those submitted by the United Kingdom representative, namely, that an objective of the Conference should be to prevent discrimination in the press against

any countries or regions of the world.

10. Other representatives supported the resolution, the points most frequently emphasized being that in recent history the world had seen only too clearly that media of publicity were often used to disseminate not true news but propaganda; that professional journalists, as well as editors and owners of the press, should be present at the Conference; that all media should be represented; and that it was important to find a solution of the problem of presenting true news as well as of obtaining true news.

11. The representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics considered that, under the present conditions, it was not necessary to widen the scope of the Conference to include questions relating to radio and the films, since special conferences might be necessary to consider those specific problems. The representative of India felt that the matter could more appropriately be discussed and decided in the General Assembly.

12. By forty-one votes to nil, the Third Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the resolution as embodied in paragraph 7 of document A/C.3/125.

13. On 5 December 1946, the Third Committee discussed its draft report to the Assembly on the question of the proposed conference on freedom of information (document A/C.3/125). The representative of France stated that the technical services of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization could be of great assistance in the preparatory work for the proposed Conference. He suggested an amendment which would add the words "with the co-operation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization" to the paragraph of the resolution instructing the Economic and Social Council to undertake the convocation of the Conference. The representative from the Philippine Republic considered that, as collaboration with this Organization had been foreseen in paragraph 6 of the report, it was therefore not necessary to mention it in

the resolution, and that complete liberty of action should be given to the Economic and Social Council. The Lebanese representative supported the French proposal, and suggested that the Conference should be held in Paris. The French amendment was defeated by seventeen votes to eight.

14. At the suggestion of the Canadian representative, it was agreed that the word "following" should be substituted in place of the word "next" in the last line of sub-paragraph (c) of the resolution, in order to make it clear that the Economic and Social Council would submit a report on the Conference to the following regular session of the General Assembly.

The report was adopted unanimously.

15. The question of the calling of the International Conference has been referred to the Fifth Committee for a report on its budgetary implications.

16. The Third Committee therefore recommends the adoption by the General Assembly of the following resolution:

CALLING OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY,

WHEREAS

Freedom of information is a fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated;

Freedom of information implies the right to gather, transmit and publish news anywhere and everywhere without fetters. As such it is an essential factor in any serious effort to promote the peace and progress of the world;

Freedom of information requires as an indispensable element the willingness and capacity to employ its privileges without abuse. It requires as a basic discipline the moral obligation to seek the facts without prejudice and to spread knowledge without malicious intent;

Understanding and co-operation among nations is impossible without an alert and sound world opinion which, in turn, is wholly dependent upon freedom of information.

RESOLVES THEREFORE, in the spirit of paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 1 of the Charter, to authorize the holding of a conference of all Members of the United Nations on freedom of information;

INSTRUCTS the Economic and Social Council to undertake, pursuant to Article 60 and Article 62, paragraph 4, of the Charter, the convocation of such a conference in accordance with the following guiding principles:

- (a) The purpose of the Conference shall be to formulate its views concerning the rights, obligations and practices which should be included in the concept of the freedom of information;
 - (b) Delegations to the Conference shall include in each instance persons actually engaged or experienced in press, radio, motion pictures and other media for the dissemination of information;
 - (c) The Conference shall be held before the end of 1947, at such place as may be determined by the Economic and Social Council, in order to enable the Council to submit a report on the deliberations and recommendations of the Conference to the following regular session of the General Assembly.
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