



Sixteenth session
Agenda item 63

PUBLIC INFORMATION ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Report of the Fifth Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Antonio ARRAIZ (Venezuela)

1. At its 887th meeting, held on 22 November 1961, the Fifth Committee considered a report of the Secretary-General on the public information activities of the United Nations (A/4927 and Corr.1), submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1558 (XV) of 18 December 1960. The related material before the Committee comprised the pertinent references in the 1962 budget estimates^{1/} and in the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.^{2/}

2. The representative of the Secretary-General outlined the major points in the documents before the Committee as evidence of the manner in which the General Assembly's recommendations had been carried out in 1961. Further substantial progress had been made in the decentralization of the services and operations of the Office of Public Information (OPI). The existing arrangements for the local production of radio and visual materials in Asia, Europe and Latin America were being strengthened and an audio-visual production unit for Africa would be established in Nigeria. By early 1962, the number of information centres was expected to reach forty, representing an increase of eight within a twelve-month period. While the professional staff for the eight new centres was being

^{1/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixteenth Session, Supplement No. 5 (A/4770), Foreword, paras. 37-40; annex III to the Expenditure Estimates.

^{2/} Ibid., Supplement No. 7 (A/4814), paras. 70-75.

provided without addition to the manning tables, OPI was close to the point at which it would no longer be able to undertake additional activities within the existing budgetary limitation. Already the staffing resources at Headquarters stood at a minimum in relation to the increased demands that resulted from the enlarged membership of the United Nations and the general expansion of its activities.

3. Several delegations made appreciative references to the manner in which OPI had implemented General Assembly resolution 1558 (XV) and, in particular, to the further decentralization of its operations. It was gratifying that so many new information centres had been opened within the policy of budget stabilization (designed to maintain information expenditure at about \$5 million), and that still more centres were being planned. The hope was expressed that the Secretary-General might find it possible - by a continuous adherence to the system of priorities, which had already yielded noteworthy results - to finance additional information activities within that policy limitation.

4. Representatives referred with satisfaction to the Triangular Fellowship Programme and the Senior Fellowship Programme, both of which were practical in scope and well conceived, and also to yet another OPI innovation - the publication at Headquarters and Geneva of a press review under the title "Coup d'Oeil".

Library facilities at information centres

5. The Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recalled that the Fifth Committee had suggested in 1961^{3/} that the Advisory Committee should consider and report to the General Assembly at the current session on the improvement of library facilities in the information centres. The Committee had accordingly examined the matter in connexion with the 1962 estimates for public information activities. It had also had the benefit of the views of the Committee of Experts on the Activities and Organization of the Secretariat (A/4776, annex IX).^{4/} The Advisory Committee had ascertained that

3/ Ibid., Fifteenth Session, Annexes, agenda item 56 (A/4630, para. 4 (b)).

4/ The terms of reference of the Committee of Experts embraced the development of United Nations library services generally and were not restricted to the facilities in the information centres.

all information centres maintained reference libraries, and that, as those facilities were being used to an increasing extent by Governments, diplomatic representatives and members of the public, OPI attached great importance to their further development. The availability of library space was therefore an essential consideration in selecting office premises for the centres, and steps were being taken to equip all libraries with the requisite material. A special manual was being prepared to assist the heads of centres and their staff in administering the libraries. In addition, occasional regional seminars might perhaps be held for the benefit of staff assuming library responsibilities in the centres. The Advisory Committee would continue to study the question and would report on future developments in its annual budget reports.

Decision of the Fifth Committee

6. The Committee decided, without objection, to take note of the report of the Secretary-General (A/4927 and Corr.1), on the understanding that material on the public information programmes similar to that contained in annex III to the 1962 expenditure estimates^{5/} would continue to be provided, and that, in consultation with the Consultative Panel on Public Information, the Secretary-General would report to the General Assembly at its seventeenth session on any special questions not covered by such material.

^{5/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixteenth Session, Supplement No. 5, (A/4770).