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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: MR. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia)

later: Mr. STARCEVIC (Yugoslavia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 72: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/SPC/38/L.3 and L.5)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued) (A/38/21)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/38/387 and Add.1)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued) (A/38/457)

1. Mr. HASHMI (Pakistan) said that his delegation welcomed the progress, however slight, registered towards redressing the imbalances characterizing the world information and communication order. The developed countries were however continuing to control the press, radio and television. According to the report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for 1978, 83 per cent of the newspapers and 91 per cent of the magazines catered to a meagre 30 per cent of the developed world's population. The developed countries were monopolizing the dissemination of information in order to gain political power. The flow of information directed exclusively from North to South must be curbed and the tendency to misrepresent the customs, values and systems of the third world abandoned.

2. The training of personnel and improvement of the technological capacities of the developing countries were important objectives of the Department of Public Information which was conducting a training programme for journalists and broadcasting staff from developing countries. Unfortunately, the expansion of that programme was limited by scanty resources. However, the assessment of programmes and consideration of financial implications should be governed by the contribution made by their activities to the objectives of the United Nations.

3. The establishment of a new world information and communication order was an integral part of the effort for the establishment of the new international economic order. The news media could supplement the development efforts of the developing countries. The role of the international news media could be extended to include literacy programmes and the improvement of agricultural methods and techniques.

4. All countries should enhance the public image of the United Nations. The Organization could not be expected to perform effectively unless its functions and problems were understood at all levels of society. In most developing countries, including Pakistan, the United Nations was held in high esteem. Consequently, the Department of Public Information should direct its image-building efforts more to developed societies.

5. He noted with satisfaction that the reports of the Secretary-General, the Director-General of UNESCO and the Committee on Information agreed that it was essential to change the present world information order and that it was necessary

(Mr. Hashmi, Pakistan)

to strengthen co-operation between the Department of Public Information and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies. Pakistan endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on Information, especially those contained in paragraphs 13 and 14 of document A/33/21 and the Secretary-General's intention to strengthen the fact-finding capacities of the information centres which would assist him in preventive diplomacy and conflict control. Those measures would strengthen the Organization's peace-keeping role and the small- and medium-sized countries could obtain assurance regarding their sovereignty, territorial integrity and the right to participate as equal partners in the international community. The lessons of history repeatedly pointed to the need for a world governed by law rather than force.

6. Mr. KHATRI (Nepal) said that the "age of information" made it possible to understand the past, manage affairs in the present and chart a course for the future. However, the benefit of the "information explosion" in the developed societies was beyond the reach of the vast majority of the world's peoples. The work of the Committee on Information consisted in breaching the existing gap. The complexity of the subject and the obstacles in the way should not induce the United Nations to compromise on the principles and objectives of establishing a new world information and communication order and obliged it to consider the following issues: firstly, improving the means of information and communication was not an option but a necessity for strengthening international peace and understanding; secondly, the technology which had benefited the developed countries must quickly reach the rest of the world in order to prevent the gap between the societies from becoming even wider and prospects of improvement more remote; thirdly, although technology was expensive, the Organization should not involve itself in projects which were beyond its financial capability, nor should it spare efforts if a project promised dramatic results within a reasonable time. The reports in documents A/SPC/L.3 and A/AC.198/63 on the acquisition by the United Nations of its own communications satellite and on the world-wide United Nations shortwave network respectively, seemed to indicate that, although there remained very few technical difficulties in the way of implementing those schemes, the economic disadvantage would be considerable for the United Nations. The importance to the Organization of having its own communications satellite and shortwave network for its activities in the developing countries should not be minimized.

7. Public perceptions of the United Nations system were generally negative for a variety of reasons which could not be redressed all at once. His delegation supported the proposals of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) in document A/AC.198/68 that practical measures should be adopted to tackle that problem. The information dissemination machinery should also be strengthened, not only to clear up erroneous perceptions of the United Nations but also to increase information transfers to the countries of the world. The work accomplished by the United Nations Information Centres since 1946 deserved special praise; the Department of Public Information should also consider practical measures to improve their efficiency, such as increasing the number of trained local staff in the various areas of activity.

(Mr. Khatri, Nepal)

8. The plans and programmes of the United Nations could not be effective unless their message reached all corners of the earth. The efforts of the Department of Public Information to set up regional radio broadcasts were directed towards correcting that anomaly. However, in Nepal, the programmes of the United Nations were broadcast in English and therefore failed to reach 80 per cent of the people owing to the language barrier. Nepali, which was also spoken in northern India, Bhutan and Burma, should be the medium for those messages.

9. He praised the results of the seminars held in Innsbruck and New York, the new electronic link between United Nations Headquarters and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and recommended that the mandate of the Committee on Information should be renewed.

10. Mr. IBRAHIM (Iraq) said that the world had long realized, more particularly in the last two decades, the importance of information as a factor for peace and international understanding. The establishment of a new world information and communication order was one of the chief ways of bringing about a new international economic order.

11. Technical progress had accentuated the inequality among States since the advanced countries controlled the flow of information. The management of information had become a battleground of the super-Powers in their zeal to win the hearts and minds of peoples throughout the world. The third-world countries wished to see a new world information and communication order as part of a new international economic order; information was the most important component of that new order because of its relationship to the human mind and man's use of the environment. At the Seventh Conference of Non-Aligned Countries in New Delhi stress had been laid on the creation of a new world information and communication order, and the functions of the United Nations in that context had been described. The Committee on Information should put an end to the dependent status of the third-world countries and the Western countries' almost unlimited power over information. The role of the United Nations should be to reflect faithfully the principles of the Charter and the Organization's purposes, namely, peace and security, self-determination and the elimination of apartheid and racism. International relations should be based on non-intervention, non-discrimination and the equality of States and the mass media should support those aims. The Zionist and Western media distorted the true nature of the Arab world and its customs and history and created a false image in order to whip up hostility to the Arab peoples. The Department of Public Information should turn its attention to Israeli policies and practices affecting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and should accurately portray the situation in the occupied Arab territories where military censorship, imprisonment and violations of human rights were occurring.

12. He urged that the Arabic and Middle East Unit of the United Nations Radio Service should be strengthened, in keeping with its important role in that part of the world.

13. Mr. ELHOFARI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation supported the efforts to establish a new world communication order; the present order, controlled by monopolies in the developed countries, did not reflect the hopes and aspirations of mankind and promoted tension, hostility and interference in the internal affairs of States.

14. Information should benefit the peoples by helping them to protect their rights and abolish racism and racial discrimination but unfortunately, as the media were controlled by the West, they paid no regard to the interests of all peoples, or to different cultures and social and economic systems.

15. The international community should endeavour to put an end to the present imbalance in information and the dependence of the developing countries on Western media, so that there could be understanding between North and South and a new international economic order could be established.

16. Although the Western media, which were privately owned, claimed to be independent of the policies of the Governments which they represented, in fact they applied those same policies, and although they claimed to stand for freedom of the press, they imposed censorship on the media, as the events in Grenada had shown. The mass media had given great prominence to the internal affairs of that island before the invasion, in order to prepare the people of the United States psychologically to acquiesce in any action taken by their Government, even though it violated international law and the United Nations Charter. Moreover, the United States had even prevented its own information media from reporting the Grenada invasion. That was what the Western world meant when it spoke of freedom of the press.

17. The work of the Department of Public Information should show greater balance and be increasingly directed towards the implementation of General Assembly resolutions. He therefore recommended that: (i) the Department should take steps to correct the imbalance in the geographical distribution of its staff; (ii) there should be greater co-operation between the Department and regional organs such as the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and the news agency of the Islamic Conference; (iii) more use should be made, in the Department and in its publications, of Arabic which was an official and working language of the United Nations, and the production of radio and television programmes by the Arabic and Middle East Unit should be encouraged; (iv) information on United Nations activities should be better presented; (v) priority should be given to the Department's activities concerning the peoples of South Africa, Namibia and Palestine in order to end racial discrimination and apartheid; in that respect, the Department had not given adequate attention to the question of Palestine; (vi) the Department should counter the propaganda campaign against the United Nations; and (vii) it should stress the importance of the Information Centres in emphasizing the achievements of the United Nations and helping the information media in those States which had such Information Centres.

18. Mr. Starcevic (Yugoslavia) took the Chair.

19. Mr. OUBELABOUT (United Republic of Cameroon) said that his country attached great importance to the matter of information and communication. On the cultural level, information should enable Cameroonians to know each other better and to realize their rich diversity and the deep-lying homogeneity of their cultural heritage. The Constitution of the United Republic of Cameroon guaranteed freedom of expression, information and opinion, and the country had consistently backed all efforts to correct the present lack of balance in information and communication.

20. A new world information order could not be established without greater co-operation between the industrialized countries, which had the technology and the communications media, and those countries which had no such facilities and were trying to obtain them. The participation of all States was also required in order to achieve a compromise based on equality of the right to the free dissemination of information and respect for the sovereignty and legitimate aspirations of all countries, particularly the least developed. The free dissemination of information would be a chimera if it were limited merely to the unilateral right of the developed countries to pass on information to the less developed countries.

21. With regard to the report of the Committee on Information (A/38/21), his delegation welcomed the adoption by consensus of the 62 recommendations contained therein. He stressed the importance of the recommendations concerning the strengthening of the role of the United Nations Information Centres, which should be directed by information specialists and be given the necessary resources for carrying out their functions. He drew attention to the desirability of strengthening the role of the Yaoundé Information Centre which served three Member States, by appointing a Director for that Centre alone.

22. The Department of Public Information was faced with the difficulty of trying to discharge its ever-increasing duties efficiently while lacking the means to do so because of budgetary limitations. The economical management of resources should not result in a budgetary policy which paralysed the Organization, and he therefore associated himself with the appeal to increase the resources of the Department so that it could carry out its tasks efficiently.

23. With regard to the efforts of UNESCO to establish a new world information and communication order, he noted with satisfaction the report of the Director-General of UNESCO on the implementation of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (A/38/457) and thought that UNESCO should be given all necessary support for the achievement of that fundamental objective.

24. Mr. SHERMAN (Liberia) praised the work of the Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information but added that, unless those bodies continued to discharge their mandates with the aim of achieving the highest welfare of mankind it would be difficult to attain the goals they pursued.

25. Although Liberia supported the recommendations of the Committee on Information, it thought that the latter should continue to be guided in its work by the principle of consensus and the value of making practical recommendations.

(Mr. Sherman, Liberia)

26. The Department of Public Information, for its part, faced the difficult challenge of effecting an increase in the quantity and quality of its services despite severe budgetary restrictions. Liberia also shared the view that the Department must intensify its public information activities in the economic and social as well as the political spheres, in order to promote confidence in the Organization, especially on the part of donor countries, and to foster appreciation by the beneficiary countries. Nevertheless, the Department must go on giving high priority to the dissemination of information in areas which gave rise to political insecurity, economic imbalance and social injustice, such as disarmament, colonialism, apartheid and economic and social exploitation; and it must continue to strive for the establishment of the new international economic order and the new world information and communication order.

27. With regard to the new world information and communication order, there was a need to reaffirm not only the importance of the principles of freedom of opinion, freedom of information and the free circulation of ideas and news, but also the right of every nation to its own political system, ideology and cultural and national identity.

28. An essential element of the new world information and communication order was the need to eliminate the dependent status of the developing countries and to strengthen their sovereignty in the field of information and communication. That process required help not only from the developed countries but also from the developing countries themselves, which must enhance their capacity to produce and disseminate information in order to share it with the rest of the world.

29. He noted the gradual recognition of the guiding role played by the press in the struggle against social ills, and felt that the role should increase, since communication was not an end in itself. In the final analysis, its aim should be to advance mankind not only in the economic and social spheres but also in the cultural sphere. Communication services should therefore serve the cause of development, contribute to the achievement of national objectives, preserve cultural values and strengthen national unity.

30. His delegation appreciated the role of UNESCO in development, as shown by its International Programme for the Development of Communication. Liberia hoped that generous contributions would continue to be made to the Programme, which had enabled his country to inaugurate a rural press, and that the collaboration between UNESCO and other United Nations bodies would be maintained.

31. Finally, he stressed that only the developing countries themselves could correct the distortion and selectivity with which information on developing countries was conveyed to the rest of the world.

32. Mr. KOTSEV (Bulgaria) said that there was no task more important and urgent than that of preserving and strengthening international peace and security. In carrying out that task, which was also a principal goal of the United Nations, the mass media had a central role to play. Practice had shown that the mass media

(Mr. Kotsev, Bulgaria)

could contribute significantly to strengthening trust and understanding among peoples and promoting scientific, technological, political and cultural co-operation among States of differing social systems. When, on the other hand, the mass media were used as instruments of misinformation, they sowed mistrust, hostility, hatred and bellicosity.

33. The Declaration adopted at Prague on 5 January 1983 had set forth explicitly and categorically the position of Bulgaria and the other States parties to the Warsaw Treaty concerning the role of the mass media in preventing a nuclear catastrophe. The Declaration had called for the dissemination of accurate information and for the renunciation of expansionism, racism, nationalism and propaganda of violence and war psychosis; it had also condemned the use of the press, radio and television for spreading tendentious and slanderous information.

34. He said that, in the international exchange of information, all countries should strictly observe the purposes and the principles set forth in the United Nations Charter, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe and the various resolutions and decisions of the United Nations and UNESCO - particularly the Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War. His delegation reiterated its appeal to States Members of the United Nations to accede to the International Convention concerning the Use of Broadcasting in the Cause of Peace, signed at Geneva in 1936. Despite the lapse of 47 years, the Convention remained fully valid at a time when the world was witnessing the intensive use of broadcasting to interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign States.

35. His country's news media informed the Bulgarian public daily about economic, social and cultural achievements of the Bulgarian and other peoples. It also paid great attention to the activities of the United Nations and its organs. Regrettably, the mass media in other parts of the world were not always used for promoting international understanding. The information monopolies were using the mass media for their subversive propaganda against the socialist States, a number of non-aligned developing countries and the national liberation and other progressive movements. Many of the self-proclaimed "independent" media were being converted into tools of their Governments' policies of pressure - all of which took place under the smokescreen of "freedom of the press" and "the free flow of ideas and information". He referred, as a recent example, to the way in which certain mass media in the United States had sought to justify that country's armed aggression against Grenada. The vaunted freedom of the press had been refuted by the clamp-down on information imposed by the United States military authorities with regard to the events in Grenada.

36. A number of developing countries had fallen prey to information imperialism. Bulgaria had always supported and would continue to support the legitimate demands of the non-aligned countries for the restructuring of international information and communication relations. The question had acquired even greater urgency owing to

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the appearance of a new information instrument in the hands of the information monopolies, namely, direct satellite television broadcasting. It was becoming increasingly important to strengthen the information and communication capacities of the developing and the non-aligned countries and their news agencies. Bulgaria in that respect viewed with favour the activities of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, whose intergovernmental council had approved 19 new projects at its fourth session, held in Tashkent from 5 to 12 September 1983 (A/38/457, annex).

37. In the current, strained international situation even greater efforts would be necessary to improve the information activities of the United Nations and use them to strengthen world peace and security, halt the arms race, ease tensions among States and explain activities related to the establishment of a new world information and communication order. Urgent measures should be adopted to improve the content of publications of the Department of Public Information and solve the problem of the equitable geographical distribution of posts within that Department.

38. Mr. SIBAJENE (Zambia) observed that the promotion of international co-operation in the information field was an integral part of international development. Public information and the mass media had a vital role to play in articulating the preoccupations and interests of the various peoples of the world. Unfortunately, the current information system needed structural changes if it was to function for the common good. Some of the reasons for its weakness were to be found in the unbalanced dissemination of information, which was itself largely due to the absence of the necessary infrastructures in the developing countries. Zambia therefore welcomed the training programme for journalists and broadcasters from developing countries and the strengthening of ties with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies.

39. His delegation supported renewal of the mandate given to the Committee on Information by the General Assembly in resolution 34/182, of 18 December 1979. A new, more just and effective world information and communication order had to be established quickly. The free circulation and wider and better-balanced dissemination of information were not only priorities but an integral part of fundamental freedoms. All countries, but especially the developed countries, had to adopt a positive attitude and extend co-operation and assistance to UNESCO, the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations Department of Public Information. Dynamic and properly-oriented mass media acting in conjunction with the United Nations information system would play an important role in furthering international peace, easing tension, curbing the arms race and promoting understanding among nations.

40. In southern Africa, three problems persisted that required the co-operation of the world's mass media, namely, apartheid and minority rule in South Africa, the need to achieve genuine independence for Namibia, and the destabilization by South Africa of the front-line States and other independent States in the region. The general public had to be informed objectively about the crimes against humanity being committed daily in South Africa.

41. Mr. VIKIS (Cyprus) said that the process of social and economic development was closely linked to the process of information and communication, and the former could be delayed or accelerated by the positive or negative effects of the latter. Progress, the quality of life and even life itself were to a great extent dependent on information and communication. There was a striking disparity in the field of information and communication between developed and developing countries. Moreover, a pressing need for greater accuracy, fairness, objectivity and balance in the world news media was felt by the developing countries which frequently received distorted or one-sided coverage. The free circulation and wider dissemination of information and increased co-operation in that sphere would benefit the international community, the welfare of mankind, mutual understanding and peace in general.

42. The response of the non-aligned countries to that situation had been to establish the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies, an important step in facilitating the exchange and dissemination of information among the developing countries. The ninth meeting of the co-ordinating committee of the Pool, held in Cyprus on 1 and 2 June 1983, had been attended by representatives of 20 countries and eight international organizations. As the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Spyros Kyprianou, had pointed out, the Pool had contributed to a better understanding of the problems of the non-aligned countries; much, however, remained to be done. His delegation hoped that there would be greater co-operation in the future between the Department of Public Information and the Pool.

43. The Department of Public Information faced a formidable task in increasing public understanding of the United Nations. There was a need to rectify the distorted image of the United Nations as an expensive and inefficient international institution for resolving conflicts and promoting socio-economic development. In view of the ever-expanding responsibilities of the Department, it had to be provided with the human and material resources it needed. It was to be hoped that efforts to improve the efficiency of the Department would continue and that a balance would be found between expansion of activities and allocation of resources. His delegation also hoped that there would be a better representation of developing countries in the Department, especially at the senior levels.

44. Since its inception in 1979, the Committee on Information had been able to solve difficult problems and adopt positive and constructive recommendations by consensus. Its report (A/38/21) represented a successful endeavour to solve an overwhelming majority of the issues at hand. The report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/38/457, annex) showed that that organization was playing a praiseworthy role in international information and communication, especially in its activities under the International Programme for the Development of Communication.

45. Mr. AVONÉ (Benin) said that information was crucial and remained a basic factor in mobilizing and organizing energies and resources for the harmonious and dynamic development of all countries. The free circulation of truthful information, useful to humanity and used in an equitable way by all nations, constituted the basis for making international relations more democratic, a goal much desired by the Members of the United Nations which accepted the equality of nations and consequently were fighting for a more just world. The right to communicate and the free access to

(Mr. Avodé, Benin)

information were inalienable rights of every individual, community, people and State. Communication should also serve to reduce the disparity between developed and developing countries, guaranteeing a more just distribution of the news media and information resources.

46. Another no less important aspect that reflected the legitimate aspirations of many Members of the United Nations was to make communication more democratic. Unfortunately, there was the risk that such change would be blocked because of the deliberate selfishness of the great Powers which currently had a monopoly of the new technologies and were using them as a means of applying pressure and blackmail in relations among States. There was no question that, unless proper steps were taken to do away with all those imbalances and inequalities, individuals would never be allowed to participate effectively in political, economic, social and cultural life, and understanding and friendship among all nations would never progress. His delegation was constantly reaffirming those universally recognized truths in order to express its systematic opposition to the current information order which was totally dominated by transnational news corporations based in the Northern hemisphere that exercised complete control over the media at every stage of their activities.

47. The Government of Benin would not cease to condemn the campaigns of defamation against the peoples of countries whose politics offended international imperialism. Far from encouraging peaceful coexistence, such practices were a threat to peace and collective security. It was therefore urgently necessary to speed up the process of achieving a new world information and communication order.

48. Democratization of international relations likewise implied the establishment of the new international information order. The United Nations had an outstanding role to play as a forum for reflection and the interchange of ideas. In that connection, his delegation supported the recommendations adopted by consensus in the Committee on Information, which appeared in its report (A/38/21). Those recommendations contained important provisions for achieving the new international information order. His delegation also supported the draft resolution adopted by the Group of 77 on the subject. In that connection he noted the efforts made in respect of co-operation with the news agencies of the non-aligned countries and the activities of the Department of Public Information in co-ordinating the dissemination of information in the non-aligned countries. It was important to ensure that the World Disarmament Campaign reached an increasing number of individuals, personalities and social sectors at the political, economic and technological levels.

49. His delegation had studied the Joint Inspection Unit's report on the public image of the United Nations. The conclusions of that report should be taken into account and every Member State should take the necessary action to improve the United Nations image. One factor which tarnished its reputation was the fact that some countries did not respect the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council concerning equitable economic co-operation among States and the maintenance and preservation of international peace and security.

(Mr. Avodé, Benin)

50. His delegation welcomed efforts to implement important regional and interregional projects for Africa, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, drawn up by the Department of Public Information. In that connection it was essential to continue and strengthen the programme for training journalists and broadcasting staff. Regarding the activities of UNESCO, the Department and the Committee on Information to establish the new international information and communication order and the holding of the Round Table on a new World Information and Communication Order, every effort should be made - in addition to the very little that had so far been achieved - to promote transcultural understanding and a spirit of consensus through international solidarity. His delegation placed particular emphasis on questions concerning the use of official languages of the United Nations in the radio broadcasting programme covering United Nations conferences held away from Headquarters and the equitable distribution of posts in the governing bodies of the United Nations in that sphere. On the use of official languages, the maintenance of a fair balance and parity was essential; and on the distribution of posts, the effective participation of Member States in the multidisciplinary and multisectoral work of all components of the United Nations structure would ensure better understanding of the objectives and consequently the mobilization of all efforts to achieve them. His delegation supported the measures adopted by the Secretariat to restructure the Department of Public Information.

51. Mr. EDEY (Barbados) said that the present-day world had come to be known as an information society as a result of the wealth of information made available through the advancement of technology. Freedom of opinion and expression was no longer enough and the new debate centred around the deeper concept of the right to communicate. Indeed, the communication sector had become the leading growth sector in many national economies. There was therefore a call for closing the resource gap, which could be achieved only by bringing about a new world information and communication order in the overall context of a new international economic order.

52. He noted with satisfaction the various activities undertaken in implementation of the International Programme for the Development of Communications (IPDC), as set forth in the report of the Director-General of UNESCO (A/38/457). It was gratifying that a number of the projects funded from both IPDC and extrabudgetary sources were for the benefit of the Latin American and Caribbean region, which included Barbados, and that UNDP and UNESCO were co-operating in a project for celebrating the anniversary of the independence of Saint Christopher and Nevis. Appreciation should also be expressed for the assistance given to the project for developing the Caribbean News Agency (CANA), the funds-in-trust for which had been made available by the Federal Republic of Germany.

53. Although his delegation did not necessarily share all the views in the UNESCO report on the right to communicate, it could not deny that the analyses were intellectually stimulating. The right to communicate would ultimately come to be regarded as a valid human right, which should be shared by individuals, social groups, nations and other institutions. The right should embrace the right to inform and to be informed - to participate in the two-way process of transferring information. There should be freedom of access to knowledge, freedom to impart it

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(Mr. Edey, Barbados)

and freedom to discuss information. However, the concept should not be so expanded as to make it valueless, since admittedly the right to communicate could not be a panacea for all the world's ills. The right of communication implied freedom of access to the resources of communication, which led to the matter of the distribution of the resources. In that context he referred to the call, made in New Delhi by the Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries for members to give careful consideration to the implications for the national sovereignty and economic development of the developing countries of the utilization of the geostationary orbit and the regulation of the electromagnetic spectrum, which were finite natural resources regarded as the common heritage of mankind. The sharing of mankind's communications resources was an obligation which had to be underscored. Every right contained a corresponding duty or obligation. Those who exercised the right of communication must be accountable for their actions. In that connection the right to communicate could not imply the right to propagate falsehoods.

54. With regard to the report of the Secretary-General (A/38/387) on the mandate assigned to him in General Assembly resolution 37/94 B, it was a source of regret that some recommendations could not be implemented in the absence of the appropriate funds. He urged the Committee to facilitate the provision of funds to the Secretariat for the task in hand.

55. In the past year, the Secretary-General had been asked to give attention to the expansion of the Caribbean Unit in the Radio Service of the Department of Public Information. When the Committee on Information had discussed the expansion of the Unit's work programme, the United States delegation had entered reservations on the proposal because its implementation would necessitate additional funds. However, the present case was one in which the principle of equity must be weighed against the principle of zero-budgeting. The work being done by the United Nations system in the region should be properly appreciated; his delegation accordingly asked for service to be provided in the two leading language combinations - Creole and Papiamentu.

56. In the present circumstances, there was an opportunity to make a contribution to closing the gap. On the basis of the recommendations of the Committee on Information, the Group of 77 had met and prepared the draft resolution which was before the Committee for adoption (A/SPC/38/L.5). He hoped that in a spirit of consensus all the States represented on the Committee - developed and developing countries alike - would present to the General Assembly a collective agreement on those questions which were of such importance to the international community.

57. Mr. LEVIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that agenda item 72 concerned the question of world information and not propaganda against Israel. In that debate it was not a question of analysing the Arab-Israeli conflict, but of pointing out the inconsistencies in the position of Jordan with regard to freedom of the press.

58. Mr. MASRI (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking on a point of order, said that the problem of freedom of the press in Jordan was not on the agenda of the General Assembly, but the situation of the Arab inhabitants of the territories occupied by Israel was.

59. Mr. LEVIN (Israel) said that, in order to support freedom of information in the world, one should first of all be prepared to establish freedom of the press in one's own country. Free elections had not taken place in Jordan for many years. Suffice it to mention the press law in that country, the cases in which publishing licences had been cancelled, and the fact that 25 per cent of the publishing companies were owned by the Government. With regard to Israel, he drew attention to numerous publications in the Arabic language, which were produced in Jerusalem, and said that he had wished to refer only to the subject of freedom of the press and that it had not been his intention to analyse in detail the Arab-Israeli conflict.

60. Mr. MAJALI (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Israeli aggression and its consequences for peace and security in the world were well known to all. Nevertheless, the information media did not always provide correct information on those facts. Israel had impeded or prevented the visits of international commissions and groups of journalists which had sought to examine the treatment of Arabs in the occupied territories. Everyone present was aware that all newspapers and schools in the West Bank were subject to censorship by the military authorities. It was to be hoped that one day the information media throughout the world would report impartially and objectively on those facts.

61. Mr. IBRAHIM (Iraq), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, referred to the representative of the Zionist entity.

62. Mr. LEVIN (Israel) reminded the representative of Iraq that his country had a name, under which it was represented in the United Nations, and he requested him to use that name.

63. Mr. IBRAHIM (Iraq) expressed satisfaction that the entity was a State which was represented in the Organization, and therefore had to respect the principles of the Charter and General Assembly resolutions. However, Israel had violated General Assembly resolutions and human rights. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that the preceding speaker had characterized the policies of the entity as democratic, the annual report of the Secretary-General on living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories (A/38/278) indicated the contrary. He read out paragraph 109 of that document.

64. Mr. LEVIN (Israel), speaking in exercise of his first right of reply for the afternoon meeting, said that he could only assure the representative of Jordan that Israel was a free democratic society where anyone could travel and see what was happening with his own eyes. There were more than 200 foreign journalists in Jerusalem, who reported on events in Israel in complete freedom. With regard to the statement that the information which he had referred to earlier came from foreign sources, he did not think that it could be said that a newspaper published

(Mr. Levin, Israel)

in Amman was a foreign source. With respect to the statement made by the representative of Iraq, he cited the names of various newspapers published in Israel and the name of an Arab newspaper published by Jews. Furthermore, he pointed out that there were nine weekly and three monthly publications and requested information on the number of newspapers published in the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq. He also noted that the régime which had governed Iraq for many years was a minority régime.

65. Mr. IBRAHIM (Iraq) said that the representative of the Zionist entity had accused the Arab delegations of trying to make him depart from the agenda item, whereas the contrary was actually the case, since that representative had asked about the number of newspapers published in northern Iraq. Therefore, it was irrelevant whether newspapers were published in the capital or in the northern part of the country, since Iraq was a unified country.

66. Mr. LEVIN (Israel) congratulated Iraq on the unity of his country, which was governed by one family, some of whose members had recently been relieved of their duties.

67. Mr. KRYNEN (France) said that the subject under discussion was the new world information and communication order, requested speakers to be briefer in their statements and reminded them that the Committee had to prepare a draft resolution. He felt that the countries which did not observe Security Council resolutions had turned the debate into a tedious exercise.

68. The CHAIRMAN agreed with the representative of France and pointed out that the discussion on items concerning the situation in the Middle East in general would be held in the future. Furthermore, the views expressed did not refer exclusively to information or freedom of the press.

69. Mr. KAZAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) inquired whether, under the rules of procedure, each representative, speaking of the exercise of the right of reply, could take the floor with regard to a specific agenda item only twice or twice at a given meeting.

70. The CHAIRMAN read out paragraphs 9 and 10 of General Assembly resolution 34/401, which provided that the number of interventions in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item and that the first intervention in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting should be limited to 10 minutes and the second intervention should be limited to five minutes.

71. Mr. LEVIN (Israel) thanked the representative of France for his statement, which he regretted had not been made the previous day. He would relinquish the time remaining for his right of reply in order to facilitate the work of the Committee.

72. Mrs. TADROS KHALAF (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) said that she wished to make several comments on the question of information in the occupied territories of Palestine, her own country. In those territories there was no press freedom. The representative of the Zionist entity had referred to the existence of several newspapers. However, most of them had limited geographical distribution and publishers and journalists were subject to great pressure and even arrest.

73. Hanna Seniora, the chief editor of the Jerusalem newspaper, Al Fajr, had been arrested and interrogated concerning her alleged relations with the PLO. Israeli troops had confiscated copies of the East Jerusalem Arab daily newspaper A'shab on the ground that they were being sent to the West Bank, where the Israeli authorities had prohibited their distribution nine months earlier. The security forces had intervened and seized publications which they had termed illegal at book fairs organized by the El Bireh Nurses Training College and the Social Assistance School in Ramallah. Kamal J'beil had also been arrested for possession of certain publications. The closing for 90 days of the office of Abd el Jawad, a correspondent for A'shab, had been announced. Fines had been imposed for the printing of calendars with "provocative photographs". The publication of a daily news-sheet by the East Jerusalem Palestine Press Agency had been prohibited. Hamdi Faraj, a member of the West Bank Arab Journalist Association, and Nasser Athiya, a member of the Hebron University Student Council, had been confined in refugee camps. Furthermore, Talal Abu Afija, who worked for the newspaper Al Fajr, had been imprisoned for four months.

74. Mr. IBRAHIM (Iraq) said that the representative of the Zionist entity had left the conference room because he was unable to face those facts.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.