

United Nations
GENERAL
ASSEMBLY
FORTY-SECOND SESSION
*Official Records **



SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
25th meeting
held on
Monday, 16 November 1987
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman⁸ Mr. FREUDENSCHUSS (Austria)

later: Mr. AL-KAWARI (Qatar)

later: Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 78: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued) (A/42/21)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/494)

(c) REPORT OF **THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL** OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL **ORGANIZATION** (continued) (A/42/571)

1. Mr. LAGORIO (Argentina) said that the overall impact of science and technology **had** transformed the world. The ways and means of implementating the mandate of the Department of Public Information (DPI) must reflect the times. His delegation supported the Under-Secretary-General for **Public** Information in taking up that challenge.

2. In an age confronting the crisis of multilateralism, the **Department** had a **special** responsibility to protect the true image of the Organization. One of the aspects of that crisis was the incapacity of the United Nations fully to inform **the peoples of** the world, particularly those who most doubted its virtues, about its constructive and tangible results. Information about fields in which the United Nations had performed honourably and beneficially should be the subject of wider and more effective dissemination, so as to form a part of the daily information equipment of those interested in world affairs.

3. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the changes being introduced in the Department would not in any way affect the programmes adopted by the General Assembly. The Under-Secretary-General was empowered to implement the programmes in the ways which she deemed to have **the** greatest impact on the international community.

4. Despite the tireless efforts of the Chairman of the Committee on Information, its recommendations had not received the expected majority support. The lack of overall agreement on such a sensitive and important issue was unconstructive and **impeded** progress in the difficult area of reducing existing imbalances in information and communication.

5. Once again, the **issue** of defining the new world information and communication order was the major point of difference among delegations, owing to the ideological **flavour acquired by** that concept over the years. Argentina accorded particular importance to **the** question of freedom of information and communication, which had **led** it, together with Colombia, **to** request the incorporation of recommendation **16** in the report of **the** Committee on Information (A/42/21).

6. The significant changes which could be glimpsed in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) reflected a reality **which** Argentina had consistently supported. The time had come for all delegations

(Mr. Laquorio, Argentina)

to look to the future with a new spirit and to avoid the temptation to take refuge in the past. The election of Mr. Mayor of Spain as the Director-General of UNESCO was encouraging. The Committee on Information more than ever had the obligation of supporting UNESCO in any matter relating to the establishment of a new world information and communication order, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 41/68 A. Historical changes were the result of actions which could subsequently be incorporated into the formal structure of societies. There was thus a constant obligation to try all paths which might lead to agreement and not to cling to partial or obsolete plans.

7. Mr. TRUONG TRIEU WONG (Viet Nam) said that, despite recent progress achieved in some areas of international political life, the circumstances in which the Committee was taking up the item on questions relating to information were not very different from those of the past. The right to communicate was a fundamental human right. Information was a vital resource, central to the exercise of political, economic and cultural power, nationally and internationally. With the development of new information technology, information was becoming an increasingly important part of life everywhere.

8. Regrettably, the world information and communication system was inequitable and was controlled by certain circles in some imperialist countries, which used their transnational news agencies and corporate structures to monopolize the international mass media and to impose their political and economic dominance over the world. As a result, the developing countries, whose conditions, cultures and aspirations were not truly reflected by foreigners, were passive recipients of imbalanced and inadequate information. Instead of strengthening international peace, disarmament and understanding among nations, information resources were thus used for ideologically hostile purposes. Viet Nam was seriously concerned about inaccurate and slanderous information being used by some imperialist information propaganda centres for psychological warfare against the socialist countries and other countries and peoples fighting for Peace and national independence or pursuing independent and progressive paths of national development. His delegation had repeatedly strongly denounced the use of radio stations established for international broadcasts as part of such warfare. The activities of such stations should be condemned and terminated immediately. Sophistry and hypocrisy could not justify their existence. Freedom of information must be linked to responsible journalism.

9. The dependent status of developing countries in the field of information must be changed, and the abuse and distortion of information must be terminated. That was why he whole-heartedly supported all efforts towards the decolonization of information and the establishment of a new world information and communication order. His delegation reiterated its opinion that, by strengthening and expanding their national information and communication systems, by extending co-operation in the field of information and establishing independent communication services, the non-aligned countries had taken a positive step towards the realization of such an order. It strongly supported the activities and systematic efforts made by UNESCO to improve and strengthen the communication infrastructures of developing countries

(Mr. Truong Trieu Duong, Viet Nam)

through the International Programme for the Development of Communication. He urged DPI to increase its co-operation with UNESCO and the Programme. UNESCO must also continue to enjoy full support from all countries in seeking to achieve a new world information and communication order. Any policy of blackmail regarding that organization should be condemned and terminated immediately.

10. Viet Nam supported measures to enhance the efficiency of DPI. Those measures should be in keeping with relevant General Assembly resolutions and the recommendations of the Group of 18. As to Department staff, the principle of equitable geographical distribution should be fully respected and the existing imbalance redressed. He expressed appreciation for the training programme for young journalists and broadcasters organized by DPI. He expressed the hope that, in the near future, young Vietnamese journalists and broadcasters would have the opportunity to take part in it.

11. The Department was confronting numerous challenges, particularly budgetary ones. However, attention must be given to priority areas, especially those laid down in General Assembly resolutions concerning information.

12. Mr. AL-KAWARI (Qatar) said that the advent of radio and television had increased the impact of the media, which until then had been limited by the prevalence of illiteracy. Developed countries were the main producers of information, while the developing nations were mere consumers. The coverage of third world events and issues in the Western media was biased or careless, sensational rather than objective. One example was the treatment of Arab peoples and issues. "Arab" had become for many synonymous with "terrorism" and "Islam" with "bigotry". The West's debt to Arab science and Islamic civilization had been forgotten. Yet events in other parts of the world should serve as a reminder that violence and bigotry were common in fringe groups everywhere.

13. There were some reasons why the third world had been advocating the establishment of a new world information order in which plurality of sources would replace monopoly, and unequal conditions in the transnational production and dissemination of information would be eased out.

14. The following were some elements of a new world information order: making available to the third world countries the technological resources and human skills necessary to convert their local mass media into international media able to compete on an equal footing with Western media; opening the pages and frequencies of Western media to information and analysis produced by the mass media of the third world in order to eliminate the one-dimensional character of the contents of Western media pursuing a more objective and fairer coverage of the events and issues of the third world by the Western media. The international information order could thus become more equitable and more effective in ensuring the free flow of information and ideas and in supporting the cause of peace and understanding among the peoples of the world.

(Mr. Al-Kawari, Qatar)

15. The final documents adopted by the Second Conference of the **Ministers Of** Information of Non-Aligned Countries, held at **Harare** in June 1987 (A/42/431 and Corr. 1) , contained many valid proposals.

16. His delegation **commended** the innovative **spirit** with which the new Under-Secretary-General for Public Information was approaching her duties. It welcomed the **continued** co-operation between DPI and the non-aligned countries and hoped that **the current** financial difficulties would **not impede those useful** activities.

17. One very useful DPI programme was **the maintenance in the capitals of most Member States of information centres** which helped **mobilize** public opinion in support of the **goals and activities** of the United Nations and kept it informed **about** crucial issues. His delegation especially **commended DPI's** role in the dissemination of information **about** the inalienable **rights of the Palestinian people**. It therefore **found** no merit in the proposal that the information centres should be merged with other United Nations **field offices**.

18. It commended the efforts of **UNESCO** to clarify issues related to the new world information order and hoped that the existing co-operation between DPI and UNESCO **would be** enhanced.

19. His delegation supported all **the recommendations** made by the **Committee on Information in its** report (A/42/21), and particularly welcomed recommendation 1 on the new world information and communication order and recommendation 10, which **contained** elements essential to that order, and looked forward to **seeing all those** recommendations endorsed by the General Assembly in its relevant resolution.

20. Mr. Al-Kawari took the Chair.

21. Mr. WIRYONO (Indonesia) **said** that, since the non-aligned countries had proclaimed the concept of a new world information and communication order, the question had **come to epitomize** the international **consensus on the need to redress** existing inequalities in the field of information and communication, **to overcome** imbalances in the international flow of information and **to utilize** the field of information for the advancement of the political stability, economic development, social **justice and cultural identity of nations**. Although it had been **recognized** that the movement towards the **democratisation** of international relations was largely dependent on enabling the developing **countries to assume** their rightful **place in the exchange** of information and communication, the deliberations in the Committee on Information had for **several years** fallen short of those **paramount** objectives.

22. They had become enmeshed in a highly polarised debate revolving around **misplaced concerns** and **mistaken perceptions** regarding the **implications** of removing old and outmoded **structures** which impeded **wider interaction in international communication**, based on the free circulation and more balanced dissemination of **information**. He underscored the growing exasperation of the developing **countries**

(Mr. Wiryono, Indonesia)

with ideological considerations which distorted and recast their legitimate aspirations to correct the imbalance in information flows between the developed and developing countries. Such considerations were viewed as a serious impediment to their efforts to reduce their vulnerability and subordination to the advanced States' communication monopoly. He regretted the Special Committee's failure to reach a consensus on questions relating to information. Its members should endeavour to avoid rhetoric and emotionalism by focusing on common interests. In that regard, his delegation had followed the consultations in the working Group to arrive at recommendations concerning the new world information and communication order and DPI. That process offered the prospect for overcoming divergencies and obtaining general agreement. To that end, he was pleased to note the ongoing efforts involving the Group of 77 and other groups, with a view to finding acceptable compromise solutions to outstanding issues.

23. The resolutions adopted by the Committee on Information, UNESCO and other relevant international forum would not suffice to close the gap between developing and developed countries. The co-operation of the international community and its commitment to the objective of a new world information and communication order were necessary for the developing countries to overcome their technical, financial and other difficulties.

24. His delegation was heartened by the strengthening of co-operation within the United Nations system, particularly between DPI and the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) of UNESCO. However, it was concerned lest, without a greater financial commitment from the advanced States, the Programme would continue to fall short of making tangible progress. His delegation also expressed its concern about the drastic curtailment of funding for DPI. At a time when the Department should be expanding its operations, it appeared that some of the current restructuring would lead to a further contraction within the Department. In Indonesia's view, operational efficiency must not be pursued at the expense of the Department's capacity to carry out its mandate. The challenge was to adopt reforms and changes which would further the Department's effective performance.

25. In the light of the financial difficulties confronting the United Nations information centres, his Government had undertaken efforts to assist the effective operation of the Jakarta centre, which had established itself as an important source of information on the United Nations to local information and education institutions. Indonesia would continue to explore other means to facilitate its work.

26. In accordance with the UNESCO approach to the new world information and communication order, the non-aligned countries had pursued pragmatic measures to strengthen information infrastructures and to develop human resources in the developing countries. The emphasis placed on such co-operation at the recent meetings in Harare affirmed the commitment of the non-aligned countries to the role of the United Nations and to the Committee on Information.

(Mr. Wiryono, Indonesia)

27. He regretted that discussion of the issue of misrepresentation or biased reporting on **specific** political issues, such as Namibia, **South Africa** and Palestine, had **focused** on DPI. The point of **reference** for evaluating the Department's performance in that regard **was and always** had been the General Assembly and Security Council decisions on the relevant items. Those forums had consistently maintained **unequivocal** positions on such questions, with which Indonesia **was** in total agreement. It was disconcerting that, when DPI reported on the solidarity of the overwhelming majority of United Nations Member States on those **issues**, it was accused of a lack of objectivity and balance. DPI would **undermine its** credibility should it **seek** to reinterpret United Nations decisions with a view to devaluing their **authenticity and authority**. He expressed his delegation's **conviction** that the current session of the Special Political Committee could lay the necessary groundwork for **re-establishing** general agreement on the mandate and programme of work of the Committee on Information. It hoped that the Working Group on that item would submit a set of recommendations which all delegations could endorse.

28. Mr. GLAIEL (Syrian Arab Republic) **raided** that the delegation of the developing countries had made clear their dissatisfaction with an **information** order that was based on the **domination** of the **flow** of news and **information** by the Western news agencies and had **condemned** abuse of the information media.

29. **Questions** relating to information were important **because** ideas and actions were influenced **by the kinds** of information received and **because** information ultimately influenced **the** collective **behaviour** of States and societies. The information media had an important role to play in the implementation of economic and social development plans, and it was impossible for such plans to succeed without their active contribution.

30. **Political** and ideological attitudes often underlay the public facade of the information media, and information **was used** to attack the culture and civilization of developing countries under the guise of **freedom** of the press. The developing countries sought an information and communication order which would **promote** an equitable **exchange between** North and South, assist in bringing **modern technology** within reach of the developing countries and **convey** objective information on their problems with a view of **their** solution. News coverage in the Western media did no more than reflect the **political** attitudes of media owners. The persistence of the countries of the North in such **practices** was an act of political choice which obstructed the joint efforts necessary to establish a **new world information** and communication order. The **establishment** of a new order by no means implied the curtailment of the freedom of information in the true sense of the word but inevitably meant the abandonment of its exploitation and **abuse**.

31. The **benefits** of a new world order could only be **realized** through closer co-operation among all the parties concerned. The developing countries were prepared to make even greater efforts, but they were, at the same time, fully aware that they were **being** asked not for greater efforts but for more concessions so that a **harmonization** of views could be achieved, always at the expense of their interests.

(Mr. Glaiel, Syrian Arab Republic)

32. It was the developing world, representing two thirds of mankind, which had a prima interest in peace and disarmament and in a world free of oppression and exploitation and governed by justice, fairness and co-operation in pursuit of development. No doubt could therefore be cast on its intentions or its efforts.

33. His delegation supported the role of UNESCO in the establishment of a new world information and communication order and commended the co-operative character of relations between its secretariat and that of the United Nations in that field. It was to be hoped that the obstacles placed in the way of such co-operation on various pretexts, the nature of which was open to all, would be removed.

34. While his delegation shared the view that world developments in recent years had necessitated a restructuring of the Organization's information activities and agreed with the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information that changes were required in management structures, no modifications should be made at the expense of the interests of the developing countries, coverage of their problems by DPI or the situation of staff members of the Department coming from those countries. The action taken should not be motivated by political considerations, and the priorities established by the General Assembly should not be altered.

35. In its resolution 41/68 A, the General Assembly had recognized the unique function of United Nations information centres as the most important means of disseminating information about the United Nations. The centres should continue to assist local media and to provide them with information. Within the framework of its new management Policy, DPI should give consideration to strengthening that aspect of its activities and should enable the centres to preserve their independence. The centres should not be consolidated with other field offices since their activities would be ranked lower in the scale of priorities if a number of different functions were entrusted to one and the same office.

36. His delegation would like to express its concern that the imbalance in the geographical distribution of staff members in DPI persisted, despite the efforts made to redress it. It was to be hoped that any reorganization would not aggravate the imbalance and would address the current situation in an objective manner despite the many pretexts advanced in its justification.

37. Mr. JAWSHAN (Afghanistan) said that it was essential to increase the effectiveness of the information system as a whole, because the obligations of the mass media had grown in the contemporary world. The current international information order was mostly under the domination of information imperialism, controlled to a great extent by multinational news and information corporations, which used it in a psychological war against the sovereignty and independence of developing countries. The developing countries received inadequate and distorted information, so as to serve the interests of imperialism. In view of the substantial role of the mass media in strengthening peace and international understanding, counteracting racism and apartheid and broadening co-operation between nations, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries had addressed the just cause of eliminating the colonial legacy in the sphere of information and of establishing a new information order.

(Mr. Jawahan, Afghanistan)

38. His country would continue to support actively the resolutions and decisions of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the United Nations and UNESCO for the elimination of information imperialism and the establishment of a new world information and communication order. It had always strongly condemned the efforts of some Western countries to impede the work of UNESCO and DPI in that regard. The advanced capitalist countries dominated the international information media, controlling 75 per cent of the television programmes and 65 per cent of the radio programmes of the developing world. A major part of the mass media of certain countries was controlled by intelligence organizations and was used by the forces of world imperialism in a propaganda offensive against the developing countries. The Central Intelligence Agency, for example, controlled 1,200 mass media units in the United States and abroad. Programmes prepared by the Pentagon were disseminated by 250 radio stations and four television units. Washington spent millions of dollars to spread its propaganda in 60 Asian, African and Latin American countries. Those information centres, together with transnational corporations in the field of information were ignoring the decisions of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and the United Nations and were continuing to spread misinformation to mislead public opinion concerning the developing countries, particularly those which had chosen an independent path of development.

39. The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan had to confront a hostile propaganda campaign conducted by the forces of imperialism. The misinformation spread by such organizations as Voice of America, Radio Free Afghanistan, Radio Free Europe and others with centres in neighbouring countries, together with the counter-revolutionary Afghan bandits continued to spread their venomous propaganda against his country. Disseminating crude lies and hostile propaganda which distorted facts about the situation inside and around Afghanistan was their daily business.

40. All those activities aimed at thwarting Afghanistan's policy of national reconciliation. His Government sought to end bloodshed and ensure conditions favourable to reconciliation and socio-economic growth through the dissemination of information about the national culture and religious beliefs of the people. It would spare no effort in disseminating information in order to achieve the objectives of the United Nations both at the national and international levels. In that regard, he pointed out that a number of international conferences held recently in Kabul had been devoted to the establishment of a new world information and communication order. His Government was committed to that objective because it was closely linked to the need to ensure peace and stability in the world, strengthen mutual understanding and promote peaceful coexistence. One of the fundamental tasks of the mass media in Afghanistan was to strengthen peace and international security and promote disarmament.

41. Mr. ALI (Kuwait) said that the speed with which information could be transmitted from one part of the world to another could be a positive or a negative factor, depending on whether such information was fair and objective or biased and distorted.

(Mr. Ali, Kuwait)

42. The industrialized countries had at their disposal highly developed information technology, while most of the developing countries lacked even basic communications infrastructure. The current imbalance arose from a situation in which the industrialized countries exercised a monopoly over sources of information and the means for its transmission. Closer co-operation between those countries and the developing countries would bear fruit in the harnessing of such technology in the service of development and would promote the creation and strengthening of basic communications infrastructure.

43. The obvious defects in the current information and communication order had aroused the aspirations of the developing countries for a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information. In that connection, his delegation wished to renew the expression of its support for the Declaration of the Eighth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries concerning a new world information and communication order.

44. His delegation attached particular importance to co-operation between DPI and the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries and wished to see such co-operation further strengthened.

45. His delegation particularly welcomed recommendation 31 of the recommendations of the Committee on Information, as contained in its report (A/42/21), to the effect that DPI should be requested to continue to cover adequately and accurately all United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine. His country considered the question of Palestine to be its central preoccupation, alongside those of apartheid and Namibia.

46. The Fifth Islamic Summit Conference, held in Kuwait in January 1987, had called for the adoption of an information plan based on closer co-operation among the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the formulation of an information strategy that highlighted the basic concerns of the Islamic world, and the establishment of a new Islamic information order. The Conference, noting the vital role played by UNESCO, which accorded with Islamic internationalist ideals, and in appreciation of its efforts to preserve the historical character of the city of Jerusalem, had unequivocally affirmed the belief of its member States in the lofty ideals of UNESCO and its praiseworthy goals.

47. His delegation, believing that there could be no contradiction between the establishment of a new world information and communication order and the principle of freedom of information, looked forward to the day when the new order would be a concrete reality based on that principle and on free access to reliable sources of information.

48. Mr. IDRIS (Sudan) said that, despite the laudable efforts made by the United Nations and UNESCO, the information gap between the developing countries and the industrialized countries had continued to widen. The industrialized countries of the North sought to impose their domination over human values as a whole, forcing them into their own cultural frame of reference without consideration for that prevailing in other societies.

49. In political terms, the developing countries viewed the establishment of a new world information and communication order as no more than an extension of political liberation and the right to self-determination, safeguarding them from the political hegemony that the industrialized countries ought to impose. The industrialized countries had begun to adopt new methods of encroaching on the freedom of the developing countries, particularly with regard to the decision-making process, thereby impeding their normal political development.

50. The industrialized countries, using the enormous capacities of their information media to give substance to trivial and groundless arguments, continued to defend the illegal practices of the racist régime in South Africa. The same media generally ignored the right of the Palestinian people to establish an independent State in its own territory under the leadership of its legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization. The world information order as currently constituted played an unconcealed role in undermining the stability of many developing countries, permitting as it did campaigns of disinformation and promoting divisiveness.

51. On the economic plane, the information media had become fully aligned with the industrialized countries in advancing the interests of the transnational corporations, which had become a cancer consuming the human and natural resources of the developing countries. The media had ignored the debt crisis of the developing countries, which had brought almost total paralysis to their economic and social development. Statistics showed that interest payments to certain Western countries were now greater than the sums invested by them in development and that debt-servicing payments frequently exceeded the value of the exports of some developing countries, particularly in Africa.

52. In the context of social issues, the world news media continued to impose the values of one culture, namely that of the industrialized countries, on small developing countries without regard for the circumstances of those countries or their own cultural and historical heritage. As a consequence, their social underpinnings, such as the institution of the extended family and the principles of social solidarity which afforded protection to the individual, were now in jeopardy.

53. His country had continued to call for the establishment of a new world information and communication order ensuring the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information based on free access to a diversity of sources. At the same time, having freed itself from dictatorial rule, it sought to protect its democratic multi-party system through freedom of information and freedom of expression. The Sudan saw in the establishment of a new world

(Mr. Idrin, Sudan)

information and communication **order a guarantee** of the freedom of political decision-making and a source of protection against attempts at domination **by the great Powers.**

54. The concerted **efforts** of the United Nations and UNESCO were required in order to bridge **the** information gap. The action to be taken should **include** intensified co-operation with the national news **agencies** of the developing countries, co-operation with the News Agencies Pool of **Non-Aligned** Countries, **training** programmes for **broadcasters** and journalists, the **transfer** of the appropriate modern technology and the funding of national **projects** in order to promote the flow of Information from the **developing** countries to the **industrialized** countries.

55. His delegation was pleased to **note that the United Nations information centre at Khartoum** had **been** reinvigorated with the appointment of a Director after an **interval of several years.** In implementation of the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communication, funding **had been** provided for **the** national information project, and **a seminar had been hold** in Khartoum on the social, economic and cultural effects of the accelerated development of communication technologies.

56. Me. DIMITROV (Bulgaria) said that, while the vast flow of information had enormous potential for promoting mutual understanding among nations, it might also be used to spread mistrust and hate and perpetuate cold-war stereotypes. For many **years,** there had been **a** substantial imbalance in the distribution of information **media among** individual **countries** and in **information** flows **between** developed and developing countries. For **that** reason, Bulgaria viewed questions relating to information as an important element of international relations and **of the future** comprehensive system of international **security.** The **idea of information security,** meaning **guaranteed access** to information **media and produatr as well as the responsibility** of the media and guaranteed protection from the misuse of **Information,** could play an increasingly important **role in international relations.**

57. His **country** would continue to participate in the efforts of the United Nations to reconcile **the** divergent and **often** conflicting **views** on those questions. Bulgaria had supported the legitimate aspirations of **the** developing **countries** and the non-aligned **States to promote** the establishment of a new and **more just** Information and communication order **based on a** balanced dissemination of **genuinely** objective and reliable information. The existing gap between **the** developed and **developing countries with** regard to their access to the information **media must not** increase. In **that** regard, Bulgaria supported the recommendation of the Committee on Information that all countries, the United **Nations** system as a whole and all **others concerned should** co-operate **in the** establishment of a new world information and **communication** order, seen as an evolving and continuous process.

58. States had **much to gain from a more** balance & **participation by** all **nations** and **cultures** in the international exchange of **information.** That would certainly help **promote** mutual understanding, **trust** and good-neighbourly relations. Throughout its history, Bulgaria had benefited from many different cultural influences. **It**

(Mr. Dimitrov, Bulgaria)

welcomed the **cross-currents** of Information and culture and a genuinely free and international exchange of **information** and **ideas**. The Information disseminated by his country was aimed at promoting **mutual understanding, peaceful coexistence and disarmament** and preventing local conflicts and, above all, a **nuclear holocaust**.

59. At the same time, far too often Information had been misused in the name of freedom of Information. The question of free flow of Information and ideas should be approached only with a strong sense of the responsibility which access to information media entailed. Progress could be made in dealing with such questions only on the basis of concerted action. No one should be allowed to become the exclusive purveyor of truth and the arbiter of freedom of information. Bulgaria welcomed the efforts of UNESCO, particularly the development of an infrastructure to redress the existing imbalance, and the efforts to reorganize the Department of Public Information. He hoped that DPI would continue the work of correcting the imbalance in the geographical distribution of its posts and fostering public support for the work of the United Nations, UNESCO and individual countries to lessen tension in international relations and prevent a nuclear war. His country wished to see a reinvigorated Department of Public Information providing an objective and more coherent coverage of, as well as better knowledge about, the United Nations and its work. Lastly, his delegation supported the proposals on the questions relating to information put forward by the representative of the Soviet Union the previous week and, in particular, the proposal to establish a world-wide information programme.

60. Mr. BUSEK (Czechoslovakia) said that, in view of the paramount task of maintaining International peace, the mass communication media could both promote and impede mutual understanding and efforts to strengthen friendship among nations. Accordingly, International exchanges of Information must serve the cause of peace and international détente. There was no place in the mass media for propaganda tools which whipped up hostile feelings.

61. The current monopoly on the information media had a negative impact on the developing countries, particularly those which lacked the technical means to disseminate Information. His delegation considered completely justified the calls by the developing and non-aligned countries for a halt to tendentious reporting by the International mass media and for the establishment of a new world Information and communication order.

62. Czechoslovakia supported the establishment of such an order because it was an integral part of efforts to democratize International relations, restructure international economic relations on a just and democratic basis and maintain International peace and security. That task was one of the most imperative challenges confronting the International community and an integral part of the efforts of the socialist countries to establish a comprehensive system of International peace and security.

(Mr. Bušek, Czechoslovakia)

63. His delegation welcomed the idea of a world information programme put forward by General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and elaborated in greater detail by the Soviet delegation during the current debate. The fact that the United Nations was central to that initiative as the most authoritative forum for an all-round exchange of information on all principal questions relating to information was very important.

64. UNESCO was the key multilateral institution in efforts to establish a new world information and communication order. His country supported the work of UNESCO in that regard and could not overlook the unwarranted attempts to exert pressure on UNESCO in order to force it to discontinue its activities in that field. The United Nations information centres played an essential role in strengthening awareness of the aims and activities of the Organization. In that regard, he pointed out that the United Nations information centre in Prague, one of the oldest in the world, would soon mark its fortieth anniversary. Though small in size, it carried out a broad range of activities aimed at promoting the objectives of the United Nations.

65. His delegation followed with interest the changes brought about in order to revitalize the Department of Public Information and welcomed, in particular, the efforts of DPI to act as speedily as possible to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its work. It was hoped that that would be done in accordance with the mandates for United Nations information activities and the priorities and targets set by the General Assembly. Nevertheless, his delegation was disappointed that the new structure seemed rather complicated and hoped that the chosen multi-media approach would prove to be fully functional. Czechoslovakia shared the concerns voiced by some delegations concerning the underrepresentation of the socialist countries in the geographical distribution of DPI posts. He strongly hoped that there would be no further deterioration in that regard as a result of the recruitment freeze or the reorganization of the Department and that that unsatisfactory situation would be resolved as quickly as possible.

66. Mr. KARBUCZKY (Hungary) said that lasting peace could be brought about through disarmament and political, economic and cultural contacts which took into account the interests of all countries concerned. As a European nation, Hungary attached special importance to strengthening co-operation on that continent, particularly through the balanced implementation of the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, including those relating to information. His country's mass media provided a comprehensive and more open information to Hungarian citizens on questions of public life and political, economic and cultural issues. A new press law adopted in 1986 had broadened access to information for representatives of the press and obliged State institutions to provide them with appropriate information. Hungary also promoted international co-operation by providing information to its citizens about life in other countries.

67. The regular exchange of information was important in promoting co-operation among States. His Government strongly believed that the broadening of information and communication ties was an essential part of a comprehensive system of international peace and security.

(Mr. Karbuczky, Hungary)

68. Hungary favoured the establishment of a new information and communication order in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and hoped that the resolutions on questions relating to information would be fully implemented. In that regard, he stressed the need to exchange the dependent status of developing countries in the field of information and communication. Hungary was prepared to discuss any initiative aimed at improving their exchange of information for the benefit of the international community as a whole.

69. His delegation actively supported the ongoing efforts of UNESCO to promote the establishment of a new world information and communication order and appreciated the work of the Department of Public Information in providing information on United Nations activities. It was hoped that under the leadership of the new Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, the Department would further improve the efficiency of its operations in accordance with the recommendations of the Group of 18 as approved by the General Assembly. DPI should encourage coverage of efforts to promote better understanding, co-operation, and peace and development and the full implementation of human rights. The plan to revitalize DPI should be regarded as tentative since restructuring should mean simplification rather than setting up new levels of management. Hungary fully supported the efforts to reduce personnel by 15 per cent and hoped that such measures would improve the proportional representation of different groups of Member States. Lastly, he said that Hungary attached particular importance to the work of the Committee on Information and fully supported its recommendations as well as the activities of DPI and UNESCO to establish a new world information and communication order.

70. Mr. González (Chile) took the Chair.

71. Mr. TERZI (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) reminded the Committee that the full title of agenda item 4 (a) of the last session of the Committee on Information was "Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information". The raison d'être of communication was certainly to strengthen peace and international understanding, and the approach to the item in the Special Political Committee should not be abstract but should relate to practical methods of establishing such a world communication order. The media should focus more on the peaceful aspects of information than on acts of violence.

72. The information currently disseminated about developing countries was not always accurate or fair. Very often the first comment on an explosion in some part of the world was that so far no faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had claimed responsibility for it, thus automatically linking the PLO with any violent act. Such comments were not designed to promote peace and understanding among peoples but rather maliciously conceived to attack one people and its struggle for independence. The preceding day, a major New York newspaper had carried a story about the constructive and positive talks at the Arab Summit in Amman that had not reported the true events but rather the incorrect and malicious

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reaction of the writer. No publicity had been given in the press to the acquittal by Israeli courts of four criminals who had shot a girl in Gaza, even though a coroner had established that the bullets which had killed her had come from their guns, or to the acquittal of the members of the Israeli State terrorist squad who had killed two Palestinians. Freedom of circulation of information and expression should be adhered to, especially by those who so often quoted article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

13. There was often a conspiracy of silence in the Western press, especially that of the United States, as in the case of the attempt to violate the obligations arising from an international treaty between the host country and the United Nations. He believed that a new world communication order would help to ensure that such information was not glossed over but readily available throughout the world.

74. The new Under-Secretary-General for Public Information was to be congratulated on her courage in undertaking her formidable task, especially when she knew in advance of the attempts made to distort the image and impugn the prestige and effectiveness of the United Nations and that, in a country which withheld some \$400 million in dues from the United Nations and used it as a means of financial terrorism, anything might happen.

75. He was happy to note that the recommendations of the Group of 18 had emphasized the need for DPI to fulfil its mandate set forth in various General Assembly resolutions.

76. The PLO appreciated the way DPI had carried out the mandate set forth in General Assembly resolution 41/43 C, paragraph 2, to disseminate information on the activities of the United Nations system relating to the question of Palestine, to update publications, to organize fact-finding news missions to the area and regional and national encounters for journalists.

77. The aggressors against the Palestinian people always complained that the material produced by DPI was biased and did not express their point of view. One way to remedy that would be to allow access for United Nations committees to visit the occupied territories.

70. Another subparagraph of the same draft resolution requested DPI to publish brochures and booklets on the various aspects of the question of Palestine including Israeli violations of the human rights of the Arab inhabitants of the occupied territories. That information was available from letters published by various United Nations bodies but was never disseminated throughout the United Nations system. He would like to see such violations reported in the media every day. The United Nations had their own monitors in the area and did not have to wait for reports from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) or the Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories. DPI should immediately disseminate information on such violations and, whenever

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possible, have audio-visual material to provide to the media **around the world** SO **that everyone** should **know the Nazi-like crimes being** perpetrated in occupied Palestine.

79. It **might be** difficult for DPI to do all **that he** suggested, **but he** did not **see** how financial **constraints** could hinder the establishment of relations with non-aligned and other regional news agencies from the developing world.

80. **Mr. BENTHIEN (Denmark)**, speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the **European Community**, reminded the Committee that the first session of the **General Assembly** had unanimously adopted resolution **59 (I)** stating that freedom Of information was the touchstone of all **freedoms** to which the United Nations was consecrated. It was **also** the corner-stone of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political **Rights**. It meant a free **press**, which might seek and **disseminate** information without **interference** from **authorities or Governments** and freedom for all individuals to seek, receive and impart information and **ideas** through any media and regardless of frontiers.

81. It was **against that** background that the Twelve viewed the work of the United Nations in the field of information, including its efforts to promote a new **world** information and **communication** order as an evolving and continuous process aimed at gradually eliminating existing imbalances, particularly with respect to the development of infrastructures and production capacities and **encouraging a free** flow and a wider and **better** balanced dissemination of information.

82. The Twelve had actively worked towards redressing the imbalance in the field of information and **communication**. Those States which were members of UNESCO supported **many of its programmes** aimed at **developing resources** for **communication and information** in different regions and welcomed the establishment of the **International Programme for the Development of Communication**. The **work of the** United Nations could succeed only if Member **States** had confidence in the bodies entrusted with a specific mandate and **it was important that** the particular mandate of UNESCO should be **recognized** and respected as well as that of DPI. The Department should strive to provide a flow of **accurate** information about the work of the United Nations, ensuring that the **Organization** received **due credit** for its achievements. DPI **should contribute to the** information and communication capabilities of the developing world, bearing in **mind** that its primary task derived from the work of the United Nations itself.

83. The Twelve were following with great interest the **reorganization** of the Department being carried out **by** the new Under-Secretary-General. That task **was not** easy, in view of the financial restraints under which it was working.

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(Mr. Jenthien, Denmark)

84. The Twelve had been disappointed by the outcome of the last session of the Committee on Information which, after intensive negotiations between the regional groups and China, had come close to a result acceptable to almost everyone but had finally failed. That Committee should concentrate on developing guidelines for DPI. Instead of formulating selective and often costly priorities, it should help by ● formulating its own recommendations. The Twelve would continue to co-operate towards achieving consensus in that Committee.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.