



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 13th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia)

later: Mr. STARCEVIC (Yugoslavia)

later: Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 72: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

- (a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (continued)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)
- (c) REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 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. SHEHATA (Egypt) said that his delegation approached the item under discussion from the perspective of its infrastructure, as linked with the trilateral relationship between information, technology and development, and of its superstructure, based on the principles, purposes, ethics and values of the new international information order.

2. Referring to the significance and context of the debate on the new international information order, he pointed out that the debate had been initiated in the 1970s, when a growing number of developing countries had begun to demand their share of world-wide communication. The new order was intended to rationalize the flow of information from North to South, to have a positive influence on the development process of the developing countries through the mass media and to encourage dialogue and solidarity among those countries.

3. The technological and industrial capacity of developed societies included an expanding ability to communicate globally. By comparison, the developing nations had inadequate news media systems and had therefore become passive recipients of the global flow of communication. The call for a new international information and communication order reflected the frustration of the developing countries with regard to economic and power imbalances: the gap between the rich and the poor nations was still growing, as was the developing countries' dependence in terms of technology, financing and trade. A new order could be based only on the consensus of both the industrialized and the developing countries and presupposed that a minimum of regulations would be accepted by all sides.

4. As to the trilateral relationship between information, technology and development, there could be no doubt that economic and social progress were dependent on knowledge, continuously enriched and updated by new information. That was true of both the developed and the developing countries. Most of the knowledge and information, particularly scientific and technical information, was generated and stored in the developed countries, and therein lay the development gap. Information technology had the potential to bridge that gap.

5. Information could be an effective agent in the development process. To that end, communication clearly depended on partnership and entailed acceptance of international dialogue. The new order must begin at home; the dialogue had taken

(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

the form of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which was being implemented by UNESCO. However, resolutions could not constitute the basis for a new international information order so long as the developing countries continued to depend on aid from the developed countries in the area of investment and training. The importance of communication in national development and in international relations was fully recognized and the need for the developing countries to build up media structures adapted to their own priorities and values had become generally accepted.

6. Referring to the role of the developing countries in the establishment of the new international information order, he observed that the McBride report placed major emphasis on collective self-reliance. Although training and technological assistance from the developed countries was important, the impetus for development must come from the developing nations themselves. In that connection, the international news agencies had become symbols of the old information order, and the developing countries were therefore proposing the establishment of regional and interregional news agencies for direct South-South news exchanges. In addition, there should be a greater variety of sources of news for the world's nations to draw upon. In the final analysis, the only way to achieve a more balanced flow of global information was to improve the news media of the poorer nations. Currently, the major obstacles to the establishment of regional news services were the weakness or non-existence of national news agencies and the lack of professionally trained personnel and of inexpensive transmission infrastructures. However, most important was the lack of a clear concept of what constituted alternative news formats and journalistic styles more appropriate to the political, economic and cultural context of the developing countries.

7. A key step with regard to the new international information order and the need to restructure old communication patterns in the developing countries was the formulation of new, more equitable patterns of national and international communication. In that connection, consideration should be given to new ideas about how more adequate communication systems were developed, to moves to decentralize national communication systems, to policies of national self-reliance and to efforts to improve and expand regional co-operation in the third world. He drew attention to the fact that the enormous advances in the storage, transfer and retrieval of information were strengthening the old concentration of social power and were creating new forms of international dependence. Therefore, the contribution of the United Nations system - through the Department of Public Information (DPI) and, in particular, through UNESCO - in introducing structural changes in that area was significant.

8. Moreover, various United Nations agencies, particularly the Department of Public Information and UNESCO, had helped to promote an organizational infrastructure for the exchange of regional information. With regard to information and the issues the United Nations dealt with in the fields of human rights, peace and social justice, he observed that self-determination was the essential objective of all peoples. However, the developing countries started out with disadvantages inherited from their colonial past. Information was therefore

(Mr. Shehata, Egypt)

the key to achieving self-determination with respect for the dignity and integrity of national culture. In that connection, the coverage the United Nations had provided, through DPI, of the preparation and proceedings of the International Conference on the Question of Palestine deserved appreciation and support.

9. As to the dimensions of the mass media's impact on public opinion, it was important to recognize that most of what people learned stemmed from the mass media, although it was also important to recognize that much of the news was determined less by external reality than by the internal logic of the media organization. It was therefore important to maintain a healthy and clean relationship between the mass media, based on professional ethics, and public opinion.

10. In conclusion, he expressed the hope that changes would be carried out by peaceful means and, in that regard, public consciousness of global issues was essential to any meaningful international co-operation. The power of the media, especially in a North-South dialogue, could not be over-emphasized. Accordingly, the process of communication must be valid enough to take into account the cultural dimensions of communication. What was needed was a system that would guarantee the free exchange of information by multiplying available sources of information, supporting the introduction of a catalogue of obligations and protecting the right of individuals, peoples and States to receive and transmit information.

11. Mr. BØJER (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said that the existence of the United Nations depended on its ability to generate support from Governments, non-governmental organizations, individuals and the media. Information must help to remind the public that the United Nations was the primary instrument for maintaining peace and security and performed valuable work in a multitude of spheres. In addition, freedom of information was a basic human right.

12. The Nordic countries recognized the importance of the work carried out by the Department of Public Information, UNESCO and the Committee on Information in connection with a new world information and communication order. Moreover, they supported the International Programme for the Development of Communication, which would enable the public to form opinions based on a free, wider and better balanced flow of information. In that context, measures should be taken to develop communication infrastructures in the countries which lacked such installations.

13. The General Conference of UNESCO would deal extensively with questions relating to a new world information and communication order as an evolutionary process. The Committee should recognize the primary role of UNESCO in that regard in order to avoid duplication of work.

14. In order to ensure greater public support for the objectives of the United Nations, the Nordic countries would welcome greater emphasis on economic and social issues, which so far had represented only 20 per cent of information activities, although they constituted approximately 80 per cent of the activities of the United

(Mr. Bøjer, Denmark)

Nations system since they were essential for the needs of the developing countries. Increased awareness of those achievements should be encouraged so as to improve public perception of the United Nations.

15. Second, the information effort for the United Nations among the industrialized countries should not be neglected, so as to counterbalance the tendency to curb public expenditure, including development assistance. Without a widespread feeling of international solidarity and interdependence, it would not have been possible to secure the political basis to achieve the objective of increasing the contribution of the Nordic countries, which in some cases surpassed the 0.7 per cent target, at a time when domestic expenditure was being severely curtailed.

16. Third, since the United Nations depended on financial support from all the countries of the world, it was of cardinal importance that it should make optimal use of its resources and set appropriate priorities in its work. In addition to the methods proposed in the report of the Committee on Information, it would be appropriate to use the services of an external and independent body, such as the Joint Inspection Unit, to evaluate the work of the Department of Public Information.

17. Fourth, he endorsed recommendations Nos. 58 and 59 of the Committee on Information concerning Development Forum which was the only inter-agency publication of the United Nations system and was providing a successful information operation under difficult circumstances.

18. Mr. LIANG Yufan (China) said that the mass communications media reflected the life of society and in turn influenced it, and disseminated knowledge and experience. Full and objective information enriched and promoted the progress of the peoples and protected international peace and security.

19. Anomalies arose, however, when information served certain interests, groups, prejudices and trends. The third world suffered from the distortion of news and from the influx of consumer products leading to a cultural invasion with undesirable results.

20. Some 80 per cent of the information services of the world were controlled by a handful of agencies which allocated less than 10 per cent of news to the third world. The developing countries had remained passive and defenceless, but their dissatisfaction now led them to call for the establishment of a new world information order, which the international community should broadly support.

21. The developing countries should have their own information services to ensure their political and cultural independence and counteract the concentration of communications among a few countries.

22. Furthermore, information should protect peace and security by eliminating distortions and prejudices. The United Nations, and in particular UNESCO, should contribute to the new order through technical training and seminars, thus helping countries establish their own information services.

23. Mr. FISCHER (Austria) said that information could either promote greater understanding and co-operation among nations or spread mistrust, fear and conflict. As early as 1976 the non-aligned countries had stressed the need for a new world information and communication order reflecting their legitimate aspirations. The Department of Public Information, together with UNESCO, at the request of the General Assembly, had organized a seminar on a new world information and communication order which had taken place at Innsbruck, Austria in September 1983 and had helped broaden understanding regarding the manifold implications of information.

24. The evolution of the activities of the International Programme for the Development of Communication, the round tables organized by the Department of Public Information and the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies should also be noted. Austria co-operated with a number of news agencies of developing countries through its press agency and its broadcasting and television system, which offered working facilities for journalists from developing countries.

25. The diversification of sources of information was a fundamental issue in the new world information order as indicated in General Assembly resolution 37/94 B. The impediments to a free flow of information were not only economic in nature. It was also necessary to ensure a political environment which would enhance freedom of expression and information. The principle of freedom of information, as enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, adopted at Helsinki in 1975, and other international instruments, should constitute the basic principle on which a new world information and communication order would be built.

26. In the work of the Department of Public Information, a balance should be struck between the demands of Member States and the need to economize and not increase the budget. The priority areas defined in General Assembly resolution 34/182 for the Committee on Information were valid for the United Nations in general, but he agreed with other delegations that the economic and social work of the system should be stressed, as well as the success of certain programmes such as those relating to the promotion of women and to youth.

27. The Secretary-General, by virtue of his responsibility emanating from Article 99 of the Charter, had assigned a new function to the information centres which was to follow developments in Member States which were relevant to the work of the United Nations. In that respect, his Government would welcome a strengthening of the United Nations Information Service at Vienna in order to enable it to act as an information centre for Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany, with adequate service in the German language.

28. Mrs. MAYER-SCHALBURG (Federal Republic of Germany) said that she supported the request made by the representative of Austria that the United Nations Information Service at Vienna should be adequately staffed. The Committee on Information had included that request in its recommendations for the current year and her Government requested that it should be incorporated in the corresponding resolution of the General Assembly.

(Mrs. Mayer-Schalburg, Federal
Republic of Germany)

29. The service should meet the requirements laid down in that respect by Mr. Akashi, Under-Secretary-General, and it should encompass not just a single country but the entire region covered by Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany.
30. It was difficult for her Government to convince the public of the Federal Republic of Germany of the importance of the United Nations if the United Nations did not inform its people about those activities.
31. Mr. STARCEVIC (Yugoslavia) stressed the importance of true, complete and objective information in international relations and noted that action for the establishment of a new world information and communication order had not produced the desired results. In his introduction of the UNESCO report Mr. Kandil, Director of the Division of Free Flow of Information and Communications Policies, had said that the monopoly of the developed countries in the information field was continuing and that the flood of one-way information had perhaps even increased. UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) would help change that situation. He therefore called upon the General Assembly to appeal to all Member States and the various organizations to provide assistance to the Programme and recalled that the Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries had declared their support for UNESCO's activities at the summit conference held at New Delhi and called for increased contributions to IDPC. They had also commended the work of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies.
32. In his view, the possibilities offered by the Committee on Information had not been sufficiently explored. The organization of a round table on the new world order was an example of that important contribution and demonstrated the co-operation between UNESCO and the United Nations.
33. With regard to the report of the Committee on Information (A/38/21), he expressed satisfaction that the 62 recommendations of the Committee had been adopted by consensus and he commended the work of its Chairman, Mr. Moreno Salcedo.
34. His delegation attached particular importance to recommendations 8, 9, 11 and 13 on the activities of UNESCO and United Nations support for those activities, and recommendations 14, 18 and 19 on the co-operation of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies with DPI. He also supported recommendations 54 to 57 on the work of the Joint United Nations Information Committee, which was the essential instrument for ensuring inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination in the field of information and communications, and the three recommendations on which a decision had not been taken pending the submission of information on their financial implications.
35. His delegation also supported the reopening of the information centre in Jakarta.

(Mr. Starčević, Yugoslavia)

36. In its resolution 35/201 the General Assembly had adopted the recommendation, which had been reiterated in various resolutions, including resolution 37/94 B, that additional resources for DPI should be commensurate with the increase in the activities of the United Nations that the Department was called upon to cover for the purpose of public information and that the Secretary-General should provide such resources to the Department for that purpose. He proposed that that recommendation should be made again in 1983 in view of the fact that, although a department as large as DPI could improve its efficiency, the increase in tasks could not be covered only by the redeployment of resources. Because of the difficult financial situation affecting many countries, that was a difficult decision which should be taken by intergovernmental bodies, since the Secretariat was bound by earlier decisions and could not redeploy resources at will.

Mr. Starčević (Yugoslavia) took the Chair.

37. Mr. KAZAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the discussion of questions relating to information and United Nations activities in that field was taking place in particularly difficult circumstances. With each passing day it could be seen how the Western Governments, particularly the United States of America, were pushing mankind towards a nuclear catastrophe.

38. The creation of a war machine was accompanied by an ideological campaign designed to use the mass media to sow hatred and hostility in the minds of peoples and justify interference in internal affairs, as exemplified by the aggression against Grenada. An ideology could not be justified with Marine bayonets.

39. A "psychological war" was being waged on an unprecedented scale against the socialist countries and many non-aligned countries and against organizations and individuals which favoured peace and co-operation among peoples. The anti-communist and anti-Soviet "crusade" on the alleged pretext of the "Soviet military threat" was central to that psychological campaign. Ideological sabotage against the Polish People's Republic was also continuing.

40. New "lie broadcasting factories" were currently being added to the notorious ones already in existence. Suffice it to mention the so-called "Radio Marti", which was designed to pollute the air waves of free Cuba with disinformation and slander.

41. That ill-advised campaign was doomed to failure. There was no corner of the world where the achievements of socialism, a means of democratic development were not known, in spite of the disinformation and slander. Socialism created the most favourable conditions for the development of the individual personality and the participation of the broad masses in the task of governing a country.

42. In view of the aggravation of the international situation, States Members of the United Nations should use all means at their disposal, including the mass media, to improve the international climate, reduce the threat of war, eliminate hotbeds of conflict, and put a definitive end to colonialism and racism, and to backwardness and poverty in so many countries.

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(Mr. Kazakov, USSR)

43. In view of the dangerous nature of imperialist propaganda, his delegation stressed again the need to elaborate a document, within the framework of the United Nations, calling upon the mass communication media, States and Governments to conduct information activities in such a way as to support efforts to prevent a nuclear war, halt the arms race, strengthen international peace and security, establish a new international economic order, promote mutual understanding and trust among peoples, and combat colonialism, racism and apartheid. The mass media of all countries must contribute to the achievement of those noble goals. The initiative of the Soviet Union entitled "Condemnation of nuclear war" was a step in that direction.

44. At its last session the Committee on Information had stressed the importance of 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 Racialism, Apartheid and Incitement to War, adopted by UNESCO in 1978, to the establishment a new world information and communication order. The Declaration, which had been adopted by consensus, had been the first international document to set forth concrete guidelines for the struggle for just relations in the field of information. His delegation was prepared to support any initiative for the drafting of a resolution which would stress the urgent need to implement the provisions of the Declaration.

45. The Soviet delegation agreed with the majority of delegations that the current system of information exchange did not promote the development of friendly and equitable relations among States and ran counter to the interests of the overwhelming majority of countries.

46. Under current circumstances, the exchange of information between capitalist countries and developing countries was basically no more than a monopoly of some information corporations situated in the leading capitalist countries. That situation justified the demands made in the Political Declaration of the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries calling for the elimination of the predominant position of the transnational news agencies, an end to information imperialism, and the modernization of national mass media in order to eliminate the imbalance in the exchange of information between developing countries and the developed capitalist States.

47. The Soviet Union was always ready to co-operate on mutually favourable terms with the mass media of developing countries and with their information Pools. It was co-operating in the establishment of local agencies, through such means as the International Programme for the Development of Communication and granted fellowships for specialists. Such assistance was, of course, provided on a disinterested basis and no political conditions were imposed.

48. The Soviet Union had always supported and would continue to support the idea of a new world information and communication order.

(Mr. Kazakov, USSR)

49. Having studied the reports of the Secretary-General, the Committee on Information, and the Director-General of UNESCO, his delegation felt that, thanks to the efforts mainly of the non-aligned countries and the socialist countries, positive steps had been taken recently to give in-depth consideration to problems concerning the international exchange of information and to find ways to solve them.

50. The recommendations of the Committee on Information were constructive and served as a basis for the adoption of a resolution to enhance the effectiveness of the work of the Department of Public Information and United Nations activities in the field of information in general.

51. It was unfortunate that many of the recommendations contained in the report did not take account of the grave financial implications which they entailed and even considered the possibility of carrying out superfluous activities. He reiterated the position of his delegation that improving the quantity and quality of the work of DPI should not be achieved through the allocation of new budgetary resources, but by means of more effective use of available resources or the elimination of obsolete programmes.

52. DPI still had to solve certain organizational problems, such as the regionalization of the Radio and Visual Services Division, before it could function more effectively and strike a linguistic balance in the various materials which it produced.

53. Above all, it was necessary to upgrade the content of DPI material, which frequently failed to reflect economic and social realities. Publications such as Development Forum tended to overlook entirely the economic and social achievements of socialist countries and newly independent countries which had chosen not to follow the capitalist road to development. In a note to DPI, the Soviet Union had expressed its grave concern at the one-sided approach followed in the 1983 edition of Basic Facts about the United Nations, which had a wide circulation.

54. Efforts should be made to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations information centres, which could not be accomplished without constantly increasing co-ordination and supervision by DPI.

55. Mr. KOVARIK (Czechoslovakia) said that the principal conclusion that could be drawn from the debates in the United Nations and, more specifically, UNESCO on the subject of information and communication was that the overwhelming majority of States felt that the current situation with regard to the exchange of information across international borders was totally abnormal and intolerable, because a handful of Western news agencies enjoyed a virtual monopoly over the dissemination of information. It was therefore only logical that the summit meetings of the non-aligned countries should have devoted considerable attention to the international exchange of information. He reaffirmed his delegation's support for efforts to establish a more just and more effective world information and communication order aimed at strengthening peace and international understanding and based on the free and balanced dissemination of information, which was closely related to the establishment of a new international economic order. Until those

(Mr. Kovarik, Czechoslovakia)

orders were established, the historic process of decolonization could not be completed.

56. Information imperialism and irresponsible use of the information media were largely to blame for the deterioration in the international situation. War hysteria was being whipped up under the pretext of the so-called "Soviet threat" and a psychological war was being waged against the socialist countries in an effort to discredit socialism. Those seemed to be the main objectives of such radio stations as Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, which the United States operated in Europe and beamed exclusively at the socialist countries. In a similar vein, a new American radio station had been established for use against Cuba. His delegation believed that the objectives and subversive practices of those stations constituted interference in the internal affairs of the socialist countries and poisoned the already tense international atmosphere.

57. In view of its adverse effects, such a "free flow of information", was not acceptable to Czechoslovakia. The dissemination of that type of information was prohibited by law in Czechoslovakia because it was believed that the State must assume responsibility for what happened within its borders, especially when activities were directed at international audiences, as was the case with radio broadcasts and the dissemination of other types of printed or broadcast information.

58. He cited the Political Declaration adopted at Prague in early 1983 by the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty, which highlighted the fundamental importance of observing the principles of the Helsinki Final Act that related to co-operation in the sphere of information. It was necessary to elaborate legal measures to govern the exchange of information, since the absence of rules was equivalent to anarchy.

59. That was why Czechoslovakia, along with other socialist countries, were calling for the elaboration of principles and norms that would govern the international use and exchange of information. Among the basic principles that should be emphasized were the need for information to serve the ideals of peace and understanding among peoples, the need for internationally exchanged information not to be subversive and the need for States to bear responsibility for the content of the information and propaganda disseminated from their territories to other countries. In addition, every State must exercise sovereignty over the dissemination of information in its territory and be able to take measures to curb hostile propaganda.

60. The foundations of a codification process in the field of information exchange had been laid in such international instruments as the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and, in particular, 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, adopted by UNESCO in 1978. On that basis, his delegation wished to suggest that work should be started on the elaboration of rules covering the international exchange of information.

(Mr. Kovarik, Czechoslovakia)

61. His delegation was aware of the difficult tasks facing DPI and believed that its work must adhere strictly to the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and other United Nations bodies. The only way to improve its work, given the existing financial constraints, was to use available resources effectively, while focusing on the main goals of the United Nations, including the struggle for international peace and security, prevention of a nuclear catastrophe, disarmament, and international co-operation in all fields.

62. His delegation hoped that, on the basis of the valuable work done by the Committee on Information in elaborating a set of recommendations for the General Assembly, the Special Political Committee would be able to adopt a resolution that would make a contribution towards the goals that had been set in the field of information.

63. Mrs. HEPTULLAH (India) said that the free flow of information was meaningless when its application was restricted to a few developed countries. It was essential that that flow should be replaced by a 'multi-directional flow so that information and communication might play a vital role in promoting development, peace and international understanding. Developing countries could not accept the transmission of their aspirations, conditions, concerns and cultures to foreign audiences through distorted perceptions. Given the current development of communication technology, especially in the area of computers and satellites, there was a real danger that existing imbalances would be accentuated unless developing countries were given assistance to overcome their technical and financial difficulties, on the basis of mutual respect, so that international understanding between peoples and between States might become a reality. That could be achieved only if the international community established a new world information and communication order. Her delegation agreed with previous speakers that development was inevitably linked to information because the information gap between the North and the South was in reality an economic and technological gap. Accordingly, efforts to establish a new international economic order were inextricably linked to efforts to establish a new world information and communication order.

64. It had often been remarked that the Western news media were quick to publicize the negative aspects of the developing countries while failing to report, much less highlight, the phenomenal progress made by many of those countries in diverse fields of development. The availability of data on the developing countries' capacity for economic and technical co-operation on the one hand and the means of information exchange and dissemination on the other were complementary. They must be viewed as an integrated whole in the achievement of a new international economic order, since the economic and social development processes very often depended on the free flow of specialized information.

65. The exchange and dissemination of information among the non-aligned and developing countries - one of the major activities of the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies - was bound to eliminate the barriers of ignorance which existed in those countries not only with regard to their own problems, but also with regard to their achievements since independence in the areas of social reform, industrial

(Mrs. Heptullah, India)

development, science and technology, and technical co-operation. The Pool, which had been established in 1976, currently comprised more than 50 news agencies, which exchanged more than 50,000 words a day among the 87 participating countries. The International Programme for the Development of Communication would have an important role in ensuring an orderly transition to the new order. It was gratifying to learn from the reports of the Secretary-General that the DPI had continued to strengthen its co-operation with the Pool of Non-Aligned News Agencies and with the regional news agencies of developing countries. However, that co-operation could be broadened and strengthened even further.

66. Freedom of information was a fundamental human right, which it was the task of the international community to protect. There were, however, frequent violations of human rights in various parts of the world that called for increased action on the part of the Department of Public Information. Her delegation regretted to note that one of the recommendations which had not been adopted at the substantive session of the Committee on Information, held in June and July 1983, was the recommendation regarding coverage of policies and practices affecting the human rights of the population in the occupied Arab territories. It hoped that that Committee would in the course of its future deliberations accept that recommendation.

67. Her delegation had always co-operated with the Committee on Information and UNESCO in the common objective of obtaining 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 better balanced dissemination of information. It should, however, be borne in mind that mere transfer of technology would not solve the basic problems. In fact, economic development strategies were now emphasizing the concepts of equality, self-reliance, participation, appropriate technology and integration of traditional and modern systems. Similarly, in the field of information and communications, the real need was to develop a world-wide communications network composed of many different systems, characteristic of each society, within which the most advanced technologies would be flexibly geared to the needs of all human communities.

68. Ms. FAWTHORPE (New Zealand) noted that the Committee on Information had become the central forum within the Organization for the discussion of two interrelated aspects of the information question: the examination of United Nations activities in the field, especially the work of the Department of Public Information, and the establishment of a new world information and communication order. The purposes of the United Nations information network, centred in DPI, were central to the achievement of the goals of the Organization. United Nations efforts to promote peace, economic growth and social development had little chance of succeeding without public understanding of the nature of the problems entailed and without public involvement in programmes designed to solve them.

69. Nevertheless, there was a constant need for a strict ordering of priorities within DPI because, while the demands being placed on it were seemingly infinite, the resources available were limited. Support for a more effective dissemination

(Ms. Fawthorpe, New Zealand)

of information about the United Nations should not mean endorsement of all proposals regardless of cost. The questions of the acquisition by the United Nations of a satellite communications system and a world-wide shortwave network were two cases in point. The interim report of the International Telecommunication Union had concluded that the costs of the proposed systems would be considerable. There was still no consensus on the fundamental question of the need for those services, since less costly alternatives were available. Her delegation could not support a final recommendation to go ahead with their acquisition. Precedence should be given to projects aimed at improving the communications infrastructure and personnel resources of countries currently dependent on foreign media agencies. It should be noted that the UNESCO International Programme for the Development of Communications was making useful contributions to that cause.

70. The problem of making the most effective use of DPI resources was not new. Two years earlier, her delegation had expressed concern that the Committee on Information had not yet adequately addressed itself to the evaluation of short- and medium-term programmes. It therefore fully supported the Committee's recommendation No. 43, encouraging the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to develop a system for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of DPI activities. Positive recommendations had also been made to strengthen the co-ordinating role of the Joint United Nations Information Committee.

71. The call for establishing a new world information and communication order had grown out of the wish of many countries, especially the developing countries, to redress imbalances existing in world communications systems and, in particular, to acquire information systems on a par with those of the developed countries. As a small, geographically isolated country, New Zealand was fully conscious of the importance of a well-developed information system benefiting all its citizens. The improvement of national information systems therefore had its firm support. Freer circulation and a better balance of information at the international level had little value unless information could also be freely gathered and disseminated at the national level. New Zealand would therefore reject any move that could, for whatever reason, limit the freedom of the media to report on events in their own country and in the world at large.

72. It was regrettable that growing ideological strains had impeded real progress on the establishment of a new order based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information. Even though UNESCO had prime responsibility for defining the concept, the size and scope of DPI activities had drawn the Committee on Information into the debate as well. In her delegation's view, an ideological approach oversimplified the problem of the disparity and imbalance of information flows. A more productive approach would be to concentrate on practical measures, such as the training of national media personnel and other means of improving national communications infrastructures, with a parallel monitoring and streamlining of United Nations information activities to ensure maximum effectiveness. In closing, her delegation urged those involved in the preparation of resolutions on that important item to bear in mind one of the basic goals of United Nations information activities, namely, the strengthening of international understanding.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ MEDINA (Colombia) took the Chair.

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73. Mr. AGUIRRE (Chile) observed that the question of information and communication had now become a global, coherent project. The developing countries, which had come out against the existing imbalances in communication, now had an opportunity to explain the nature of their needs and achieve co-operation within more equitable structures that would give them access to information and communication media.

74. Communication media had a specific responsibility to safeguard the particular identity of each State and to promote friendship and co-operation among peoples. The new world information and communication order, reflecting the principles of freedom set forth in the Charter, would in no way weaken the free international exchange of knowledge, ideas, opinions and information. It was unacceptable to identify the responsibility of information media with a service to a particular political régime or to a group of ideologically related countries.

75. Duplication of efforts would have to be avoided through co-ordination, and there UNESCO would play the main role. Communication had a basic impact on the economic, social and cultural development of peoples, since science and technology were the decisive factors for progress.

76. Since all were living in a single world with many voices, it was essential to safeguard the basic principles of the United Nations Charter in order to strengthen justice and order in international relations. Chile committed itself to co-operation in the search for just and balanced information media that would reinforce the principles of freedom.

77. Mrs. TADROS KHALAF (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) said that the plight of Palestine was one of the greatest human tragedies of the century, that of a people subjected to expulsion and the expropriation of their lands and to sporadic acts of genocide, beginning with the massacre of Deir Yassin in 1948 up until those of Sabra and Shatila in 1982, not to mention the Al Ansar concentration camp in southern Lebanon, where over 5,000 Palestinian prisoners were being held by the Israeli occupying forces in what amounted to a new Auschwitz.

78. The question of Palestine should be of central importance to the information activities of the United Nations because it was directly related to the Organization's priority areas of peace and security. It was difficult to understand why the recommendation made the previous year by the Committee on Information relating to the Palestinian people and requesting coverage of the policies and practices that were frustrating the speedy accomplishment of self-determination by the Palestinian people on its national soil, had not been adopted, especially in view of the fact that the furthering of peace and the conveying of truth were two aspects of information so essential as not to permit the shelving of the Palestinian problem.

79. One of the stated aims of the Committee on Information was to establish "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". There was no question which was as sensitive to those aims as the question of Palestine.

(Mrs. Tadros Khalaf, Observer, PLO)

80. The connection between committing a crime and making up stories to cover it was a well-known tactic; another was the psychological process of projection in order to divert attention away from oneself. To attack others and call it self-defence was also a well-known game. An example of such tactics was what had happened in the Committee when the Zionist representative, using the right of reply to representatives who had mentioned that Israel was an obstacle to the implementation of peace-keeping functions in South Lebanon, could not find a way to defend himself except by attacking the Palestinians, referring to them as terrorists and pretending that the aim of the operation launched in Lebanon was to protect civilians in the North of Galilee, in spite of the fact that a cease-fire had been observed for over a year.

81. The methods used to suppress information on the question of Palestine ranged from the omission of references to Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Organization to the use of lies and insults and the fabrication of myths. One of the Zionist myths was that of a "land without a people for a people without a land", which fell to pieces when it was discovered that the land had a people. Another myth which had collapsed was the supposed integration of the refugees in the lands where they had sought refuge. The Palestinians were deeply attached to their past and their country, and they had demanded their right to self-determination and the establishment of their own independent State under the leadership of their sole legitimate representative, the Palestine Liberation Organization. The myth of the Palestinians as terrorists had also fallen to pieces because of the existence of a world conscience and of peace-loving nations in the world. The Zionists had also attempted to exterminate the Palestinians physically through the murderous war launched in the summer of 1982 against the Palestinian and Lebanese peoples and the suppression of their political expression.

82. In concluding, she asked, with a view to furthering the goals set out by the Committee on Information, that the Committee should see to it that the recommendations on the question of information contained in part II, section D of the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on the Question of Palestine were implemented.

83. Mr. MAJAL (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that an important aspect of the Israeli aggression against the Arab nation was the distortion of facts in the matter of information. Certain information media described the continuous aggression of Israel against the Palestinian Arab people and the Arab territories as a war of self-defence.

84. The Israeli representative's lies were no longer acceptable to the international community. All delegations participating in the current session realized that world peace and security were threatened and that peace in the Middle East was basic to the maintenance of world peace. Consequently, it was not surprising that the question of the Middle East figured in all the discussions held in the United Nations. The agenda item on questions relating to information was no exception. The Arab nations realized that they were facing an information war waged directly by Israel and indirectly by others, since Western information media

(Mr. Majal, Jordan)

were predisposed against them because of the Israeli propaganda machinery for distorting the facts concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict. That information war was no less dangerous than the Israeli aggression against the Arab people, because it prevented international public opinion, especially that of the regions which supported that aggressor State, from understanding the true facts.

85. The record of Israeli aggressions was well known to all. It had occupied the Arab territories since 1967, had waged a war of aggression against Lebanon and, before that, had destroyed nuclear installations in Iraq.

86. Those who claimed to be concerned about journalists and freedom of the press would certainly not be able to answer when they were asked why they had prevented journalists, including Western journalists, from reporting Israel's inhuman acts against women, children and the whole population of the occupied territories. They could not justify its refusal to receive international missions investigating those practices. Israel had prevented the visit of two information missions requested by the United Nations in 1983.

87. In Jordan, journalists knew their duty and the methods of Israel. The reputation of the Jordanian press in the region needed no defence. In Jordan, the freedom of the responsible press was respected and those who criticized it had only to read a Jordanian newspaper. He would limit himself to raising the question of the newspapers closed down by the Israeli occupation authorities and the Arab journalists detained by those authorities.

88. Mr. LEVIN (Israel) said that he had listened to the representative of Jordan speaking in exercise of his right to propaganda and although the preceding day that representative had called him a liar and had persisted in using that epithet at the current meeting, he would merely refer to some of the realities concerning Jordan's freedom of information. He read out some extracts from a press release of the Publicity Department of the Jordanian Ministry of Information, published in response to the growing discontent over the Jordanian Government's muzzling of the information media. The extracts were taken from an Arab newspaper published in Cyprus on 1 August 1983.

89. They emphasized the need to conform to the following strict guidelines. First, the publication was prohibited of complaints which took the form of notices, open letters or appeals to the public. Secondly, news or articles sent in by readers to the "letters to the editor" section or a similar department had to be edited and their content verified. Thirdly, articles referring to political questions or Government institutions should give prominence to the views of persons occupying official posts who were responsible for such questions. It was essential to refrain from questioning the capability of the Government and its machinery. Fourthly, all articles must be positive and avoid destructive criticism. The editorial must appear on the first page. Lastly, the editors or assistant editors must attend weekly meetings designed to strengthen the links between the press and the Government.

(Mr. Levin, Israel)

90. As to the Jordanian press, it had been prohibited in March 1967. There had been only one newspaper started in Jerusalem after that date. At present, in East Jerusalem there were four daily newspapers, two which appeared twice a week, nine weeklies and three monthly publications. Many of them, owned by Arabs, often criticized the Government but were published just the same.

91. Mr. HAMADNEH (Jordan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the members of the Committee were aware that the representative of Israel was trying to divert their attention to subjects which had nothing to do with the discussion, for the purposes of propaganda. The Jordanian delegation categorically rejected the assertion that only one newspaper had existed before the 1967 aggression. In fact, there had been six newspapers, namely, Al Jihad, Al Difaa, Ajbar al Usbua, Al Urdun and two weeklies published in Amman. It would be better for the Israeli representative not to speak of freedom of the press and of information, in view of the fact that the Israeli Government had been condemned by various committees and bodies and that the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Population of the Occupied Territories, submitted to the Committee at the preceding session contained information on the occasions when Israel had shut down the Arab press and jailed its journalists.

92. The CHAIRMAN gave the floor to the representative of Israel, reminding him that he had five minutes to reply.

93. Mr. HAMADNEH (Jordan), speaking on a point of order, said that the representative of Israel had already exercised his right of reply at the preceding day's meeting and at the current meeting.

94. The CHAIRMAN thanked the representative of Jordan for reminding him of that situation and suggested that the right of reply should not be postponed so as not to confuse the discussion.

95. Mr. LEVIN (Israel) said that at the same earlier meeting the representative of Jordan had also asked for postponement of his right of reply. The rules of procedure provided that the right of reply be granted the same day. If the representative of Jordan touched on a new subject, the right of reply should refer to what he had said. The right of reply was granted twice at the end of each meeting. There was absolutely no reason why that right should not be granted to the delegation of Israel, nor was there any reason for the Chairman to help the representative of Jordan to distort the truth, as he often did.

96. The CHAIRMAN stated that he did not help anyone: his decisions as Chairman conformed to the rules of procedure. With a view to a Solomonic solution of the problem, he suggested that the representative of Israel should postpone exercise of the right of reply to the following afternoon.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.